



ARK THE LEGEND

BOOK 15

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Ark the Legend

(아크 더 레전드)

by
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Synopsis

A new game which the nation has dived into.

From the bloody battlefields to the pyramids of ancient times, head into the colourful world of Galaxian.

The glorious days of the legendary gamer Ark is over.

From finding a job to saving the party from a humiliating death, nothing is easily solved.....

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Space 1: Lost Planet

SPACE 1. Lost Planet

“What is this?”

Ark scratched his head and asked. Ark was currently riding on Marquis Martin’s ship. A 3D image was rising from Marquis Martin’s Nymphe. However, a ‘?’ was floating above Ark’s head.

Ark couldn’t understand Marquis Martin’s intent.

‘Damn, doing this when I was busy....’

In fact, deciding to ride on this ship wasn’t an easy decision for Ark. While returning to S-20 after receiving the Phantom Boots, he had received a letter.

It was an SOS from Clem seeking help! It was a fairly serious problem for Ark. If he had to briefly describe it, the Agent could be called a type of service company.

It was a company that would dispatch personnel depending on the situation, from warriors to hunt monsters, researchers and engineers to construction sites, ranger or scholars to survey an area, *etc.* And he received such a request not long ago.

Clem of the Silver Hand had required support in the Outlands of Istana. It had been a while since he founded the Agent and this was his first official commission. Ark had also received a lot of help from the Silver Star in the early days.

‘Well, I would’ve gone directly....’

At the time, Ark had some separate work to do.

Looking for the 3rd Divine Artefact. It wasn't something that could be left to others. Ark was unable to do anything so he dispatched the flagship of Dark Eden, the Royal Guards. They should be sufficient.

But the next letter stated that the dispatched Royal Guards were in danger. Once again, the Royal Guards were NPC pioneers so they could resurrect with the Fairy if they died. In the worst case scenario, he didn't need to worry about losing his employees.

But a considerable amount of money was required for the resurrection. It meant there would be a deficit if the Royal Guards were killed. The first official request would also fail and the Agent's reputation would drop. It would be difficult to find future jobs and it would become a burden to operate the Agent in the future.

However, those were secondary problems.

'I reached this place because of the Silver Hand. If I hadn't met the Silver Hand then I would still be stuck on Beltana. I also wouldn't have received the support of the Royal Guards. I owe the Silver Hand.'

He always returned everything he received. If there was a grudge then it would multiply! If he received a favour then he would return it!

This wasn't a situation where he would question the pros and cons. This was Ark's unchanging view of life. It was because of this that he could form a good connection with people who have maintained his trust.

"Stop all other business and launch a rescue operation to save the Silver Hand!"

Ark hurriedly gathered a rescue team consisting of Rapid, Kurakan, Ellain,

Ferguson, A and B to fly to Vesta. But then Ark received an unexpected visitor.

“I don’t know what is going on but there is a place you need to go with me first.”

This was Marquis Martin.

There was no need to mention it but Marquis Martin was like a guardian to Ark. There wasn’t a formal sponsor agreement but he played a profound role in Ark’s growth since Beltana.

However, it wasn’t just Ark receiving benefits. Thanks to Ark, Marquis Marin was able to obtain the upper hand in the magic circle incident and gained exclusive information that put Marquis Jyubel in check. In other words, Marquis Martin gave Ark preferential treatment for rewards.

In the end, the two of them had a mutually beneficial relationship like that between a crocodile and alligator. Was this a glimpse of the relationship between politics and business? No, Galaxian was a game world so it was natural to receive compensation for helping NPCs. And indeed, Marquis Martin always get a slightly better than expected reward.

It was different from the Silver Hand but Marquis Martin was also Ark’s benefactor. And he wouldn’t go directly to S-20 for no reason. But he couldn’t just blindly follow Marquis Martin.

Ark worried for a while before asking cautiously.

“Do I need to go right now?”

“Is your business urgent?”

“Yes.”

“I see....”

Marquis nodded at the sight of those gathered around Ark before looking at

Rapid. And he thought for a moment before opening his mouth again.

“In fact, my problem isn’t immediately urgent. No, I don’t even know if it is a problem with urgency. To be honest, I can’t grasp a feel of the situation or figure out how to deal with it. The only thing clear is that you need to be aware of the problem.”

Ark was slightly panicked at the end of it.

Marquis Martin had come directly to S-20. He could only imagine that something unusual had happened. This was the first time he had seen Marquis Martin at a loss.

In addition, it was something that Ark needed to know?

“What is going on?”

“Where were you planning to go?”

“Me? A place called Vesta near Sidellin.”

“Okay, let’s save some time. You can ride on my aircraft and join your subordinates in Sidellin. The time it takes to travel to Sidellin will be enough for an explanation. Then the decision will be up to you. Does that work?”

If he passed through Sidellin then he would be a little delayed.

“I understand.”

But Ark nodded.

Ark was curious about the matter that Marquis Martin wanted to talk to him about. That’s why Rapid and the 8 others boarded the Silver Star while Ark flew on Marquis Martin’s ship. And shortly after they started flying towards Sidellin.

“Marquis-nim, this....”

“Don’t talk until you see this video.”

Martin Marquis stopped Ark and loaded a video on his Nymphé. The '?' on Ark's head right now was due to the video. Judging by the atmosphere, it seemed to be a serious problem. Therefore Ark was tense when looking at the video....

"What am I meant to see?"

Ark was forced to ask this question.

The universe floating above Marquis Martin showed nothing. Perhaps something was going to happen but there was no change in the video.

"I can't see anything? Are my eyes not working properly?"

"No, you saw it properly. There is nothing there."

"Huh? Then why?"

"That is the problem."

Marquis Martin explained to Ark.

"Right now you are looking at the coordinates X-235, Y-1078. It is the location of the planet His Majesty gave to you, Ikyullos. No, it was supposed to be there."

"Where....what does that mean....?"

"Literally."

Marquis Martin clasped his hands together and said.

"You asked for it and the construction of the Star Gate passed the audit with no major problems. Now the Star Gate has expanded to a total of 12 Federation planets. One of them is Ikyullos. And as promised, we started working to build the Star Gate to Ikyullos. We sent something to capture an image only to find that Ikyullos wasn't present at the coordinates."

Ark's head became blank.

Ikyullos was the planet he received for earning the most achievements in the quest. Now it supposedly wasn't there. He had never visited it but Ikyullos was Ark's planet! If Ark developed this planet then it would be a foothold for him to expand his power.

And he had made preparations for it. In order to secure funds to develop Ikyullos, he had Rapid design an investment fund. He was just waiting for the Star Gate Marquis Martin promised to be linked to S-20. He would pour the money gathered from the investment fund and process the development instantly!

~~WW~~! \$\$! ¥ ¥!

It would be a huge jackpot. How happy had he been the last few days imagining it?

But now it wasn't there anymore? What was he saying?

"That is nonsense. This is a planet, not something else. Does it make sense for a planet to suddenly go missing? Are you certain a mistake wasn't made? A problem in the navigation device...."

"That is common sense. So I also checked it a few times. But the navigation device worked normally and the coordinates were correct."

"Don't tell me that Ikyullos has exploded in the meantime?"

"Such a thing would be better. There would be a black hole's gravitational field or signs of debris. But as you can see, there is nothing there. It just disappeared."

"Just disappearing, such a thing isn't possible...."

Ark murmured with a dumb expression. And he continued in a narrow voice.

“Perhaps Ikyullos in the first place....”

“I can guess what you are imagining.”

Marquis Martin shook his head and interrupted Ark’s words.

“To be honest, I was also suspicious when I received the first report. His Majesty said he selected Ikyullos but Marquis Martin is in charge of domestic affairs. Maybe it didn’t exist and Marquis Jyubel drew up some papers that made it seem like it was real. Yes, the situation was enough to cause doubts.”

“You mean it isn’t like that?”

“Things had proceeded in such a manner that Marquis Jyubel might try such a thing. But Ikyullos was selected by His Majesty of the Galactic Federation. In other words, Marquis Jyubel would be directly deceiving His Majesty if he did such a thing. Don’t you know what that would mean? He is still the rightful Emperor of the Galactic Federation. If it was discovered that Marquis Jyubel would lose everything. It would be stupid for Marquis Jyubel to do such a thing just to trick one pioneer.”

...Certainly. Jyubel wouldn’t risk his position.

Then Marquis Martin looked at Ark and started talking again.

“Ikyullos was clearly a planet that existed. I can guarantee that much.”

“Marquis-nim?”

“Yes, I was vaguely familiar with the name after hearing that you received Ikyullos. And I remembered it not too long ago. Ikyullos is a planet adjoining one of the routes used to travel from the Galactic Federation to the space frontier. Due to the characteristics of this area, the route is often subject to pirate invasions. So I conducted a military operation in the area. I didn’t participate directly but I remember Ikyullos. In other words, the thousands of soldiers who

participated in the military operation are witnesses.”

“Then it really.....”

“The planet that disappeared existed until recently.”

“How does that make sense?”

“Yes, it doesn’t make sense. But it is true. And....”

“And?”

Ark narrowed his eyes at Marquis Martin. Then Marquis Martin sighed with a worried expression and said.

“This is confidential information but this isn’t the first time such a thing has happened.”

“This isn’t the first time? There was another incident of a planet disappearing?”

“This is the first time in the Galactic Federation but there have been rumours of planets disappearing in the space frontier. But it wasn’t confirmed. As you know, the space frontier is everywhere except for the areas ruled by the 3 powers. The Council can’t even determine all the areas of the frontier. The number of planets are unknown so it is unconfirmed whether a few have disappeared or not. Therefore the rumours were dismissed and it just became a ghost stories among pioneers. No, the 3 powers and the Council kept it quiet.”

There were two reasons for this.

First, it was a matter for the 3 powers and the Council. The 3 powers and the Council managed the entire galaxy. They couldn’t publish that planets somewhere in the galaxy were disappearing. The authority of the 3 powers and the Council would come crashing down and the residents would fall into fear and chaos.

And the second reason was that the planets were in remote locations, making it difficult to even check if they were missing. Until now it hadn't been confirmed that the planets were gone. In fact, the 3 powers and the Council hadn't suffered any damage so there was no need to magnify the problem.

But Ark didn't want to know about things like that. The planet that vanished this time was Ikyullos that belonged to Ark. Ark wanted to know how the Galactic Federation was handling this issue.

Marquis Martin's answer....

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Didn't I say it? The disappearances in the frontier are just ghost stories. The current Galactic Federation agrees with the Council's stance. This is the first time a disturbing incident is happening in the Galactic Federation so they aren't going to release it."

"But isn't the planet actually gone?"

"Ikyullos is a planet His Majesty gave you. In other words, it was the Emperor's planet until given to it. Average citizens are prohibited from even exploring it. An average citizen won't even know that Ikyullos is missing. There is no reason for the Galactic Federation to announce such a thing."

"So what about me?"

This was what Ark really wanted to know. Whatever the reason was, Ikyullos was gone.

He couldn't understand it but it had happened. The universe was large and despite how arrogant they were, the 3 powers only had a handful of knowledge. Things that couldn't be scientifically explained could happen at any

time.

What would be done now? Ark would suffer enormous damage due to this. It wasn't developed yet but the benefits from the development had disappeared so he should be compensated in some way.

Marquis Martin answered with a sigh.

"This is the reason why I came to visit you. I examined the data the Galactic Federation had about the case. If Ikyullos has disappeared then the reward will be invalidated."

"You mean....?"

Ark asked with an uneasy expression. As expected, Marquis Martin nodded.

"Yes, a record remains of an investigation team going to Ikyullos before the Emperor gave it to you. In other words, you were given Ikyullos before it disappeared. This is the result of a natural disaster so the Federation can't give you another reward."

"Then am I just supposed to give up?"

"It would be fortunate if you could just simply give it up but...."

"But?"

Ark's entire planet had vanished. What was Marquis Martin saying? Ark made an astounded expression, causing Marquis Martin to sigh once again and say.

"Basically, all the planets in the Galactic Federation zone belongs to the Emperor. Being made the lord of a planet means the Emperor authorized you to manage it. The lord would then have an obligation to give a portion of the profit as taxes. However, Ikyullos has disappeared. This meant that you lost the planet the Emperor entrusted to you. Then the logical conclusion is that you are responsible for the disappearance of Ikyullos."

“That is ridiculous....”

He had received the planet as compensation but hadn't even seen it yet. He hadn't received even 1 copper from Ikyullos yet. Now that it vanished, he was supposed to be held responsible for it? Wasn't it like asking for compensation from a victim? It was too outrageous to the point that he couldn't even be offended.

Marquis Martin lightly tapped the table as he saw Ark's blank expression.

“It is indeed dirty. This is a common occurrence in this world. Your position is different from the other lords. Ikyullos is a result of your achievements. Unfortunately, this happened after you became the lord but you won't be asked to take responsibility. But.....”

“I shouldn't expect another reward.”

“Unfortunately.”

Unfortunately? Would the word 'Unfortunately' clean up the problem? No! Absolutely not! Ark would've preferred to not receive the planet in the first place if this was going to happen. Then was he going to give up because the entire planet vanished? Wasn't that impossible?

Then Marquis Martin looked at Ark and said in a low voice.

“...That doesn't mean you have to give up.”

Ark narrowed his eyes at Marquis Martin's words.

At first, it seemed like he was telling Ark to give up. But now there seemed to be a hidden meaning. Ark pondered for a while before an '!' floated on top of his head.

No, Ark had never thought about giving up in the first place.

“Yes, it is like Marquis-nim said. Do you think it is a coincidence that such an

incident occurred on the planet that Marquis Jyubel picked?”

“That wouldn’t happen by chance.”

The corners of Marquis Martin’s mouth slowly rose. Now Ark realized why Marquis Martin came to him.

There was no coincidences in this world. And something this weird wouldn’t happen without a cause. There was definitely a reason behind Ikyullos’ disappearance.

Although he didn’t know the cause yet....

‘The planet wasn’t destroyed but disappeared without a trace. It is impossible to be one of the 3 powers since things are tense due to antimatter. Even Marquis Jyubel doesn’t have the power to push Marquis Martin right now. A similar incident had occurred in the space frontier so it is hard to think that Marquis Jyubel was directly involved. But that is just talk. Does Marquis Martin think that Marquis Jyubel know more about the planet disappearances?’

Ark had that idea.

Again, there was always a cause behind everything in the world. And there was a pattern even in chaos.

The planet disappearing incidents. There would be a pattern behind the reason for the planets vanishing. This part was the key. Did Marquis Jyubel identify the pattern? And he knew that Ikyullos disappeared?

‘It is no coincidence that Marquis Jyubel picked Ikyullos!’

If he could prove this then the situation would vary by 180 degrees. The disappearance of Ark’s planet was a conspiracy from the start.

Naturally Ark had the right to demand compensation for that. As well as from Marquis Jyubel who knew the planet would vanish.

That alone was already a felony. The Emperor would have to pay the price.

“Like I said, the Galactic Federation won’t publish this incident. Naturally there won’t be a formal investigation. But my position means I can personally investigate. But then I remembered you. As far as I know, you are the right candidate among the pioneers. You did gain the best achievements during the magic circle investigation.”

“...Besides being the other party involved.”

“So you will investigate twice as hard.”

This was the reason Marquis Martin came to Ark. This was an opportunity Marquis Martin was giving to Ark!

Right now, Ark was going to help the Silver Hand after they sent a SOS. However, if Ark lost Ikyullos then he would suffer a financial loss. The plan to enter the frontier using Ikyullos as a springboard would also fail.

‘But I can’t ignore the request of the Silver Hand. And some information related to Ikyullos is still in doubt. There is no guarantee I can find some information even if I go there. On the other hand, the odds of rescuing the Silver Hand is very high.’

He had to choose one of these options.

“This is quite difficult.”

Marquis Martin nodded.

“Rescuing someone or your planet. It is difficult to choose. But are you sure you need to select just one? Aren’t you a pioneer? You also seem to have a team that accompanied you from S-20. Aren’t there any reliable people among them for the rescue operation?”

“No but.....”

“Then is there another problem?”

“But I’m the only one with a ship.”

“You are someone who doesn’t listen to other people’s words. I clearly said on S-20 that you would go with me. And I also don’t condone nonsense like this.”

“Huh? Then.....?”

“I am a person who likes to give service after selling something. The results of the investigation is also important to me. So my cruiser is waiting at the Federation Headquarters in Tatuine. The speed and space exploration equipment cannot be compared to normal pioneer spaceships.”

Marquis Martin smiled and answered.

A cruiser dedicated to the noble Marquis Martin of the Galactic Federation! The Silver Star was a superior grade 4 battleship. Of course, it couldn’t be compared to the grade 5 cruiser.

It was the highest quality spaceship for nobles. Like he said, the speed and exploration equipment was probably superior. It was made by having money literally poured into it. In other words, it was much better than the Silver Star.

He knew all this without even glimpsing the ship! Thanks to that, Ark’s troubles were neatly resolved.

“You want me to do it?”

“Yes, I have another job.”

Ark spoke to the people riding on the Silver Star after arriving at Sidellin. And Rapid’s eyes narrowed as he roughly explained the situation.

“You are going to follow without knowing anything?”

“I won’t know until I try. But I need to hurry if I want to find something.”

“Then you’re going to figure out how Ikyullos disappeared?”

“I will be going with Marquis Martin. So I will leave you the Silver Star. No, you’ll be left with the Silver Star and the rest of the crew.”

It was true. Ark could leave for this task because of Rapid! The Silver Hand had 20 people. Combined with the additional Royal Guards, there were 28 people. The fact that Clem sent a SOS with so many people meant the dungeon had a pretty high difficulty level.

It was a big burden to send his subordinates to a place like that alone. He probably would’ve moved directly. But Rapid was a reliable employee no matter how much he denied it.

Rapid had competed against Ark in New World as Alan! Of course, Rapid still hadn’t fully overcome his obstacles and his combat skills were inferior to the previous Alan. But Ark knew that Alan wasn’t only proficient in combat skills. No, Alan’s value was his ability as a commander.

“Well, I still stepped on him in the end.”

“What?”

Ark realized what he said and quickly shook his head.

“Huh? No, it is nothing. Do you understand? Once again, I am leaving you the Silver Star and my employees. I believe in you that much. However, you don’t need to work too hard to return my expectations. Don’t be unreasonable and get wiped out in vain.”

“Who are you talking about?”

“You, Rapid. I told you, I believe in you.”

“If you trust me then don’t say that I’ll be wiped out! And I’m not too worried

about meeting your expectations.”

“You are so reliable.”

Ark grinned and nodded.

“Yes, keep that mindset. I will join you as soon as I clean up the other matter. If the Silver Star is damaged or anyone dies then you would’ve failed to meet my expectations.”

“Shut up and get lost!”

Thus he left after encouraging (?) Rapid.

He then headed towards the Federation office in Sidellin where Marquis Martin was waiting. It wasn’t just Marquis Martin. While Ark was having a conversation with Rapid, the space cruiser had arrived from Tatuine.

“This....”

“Ah, is this your first time? This is my private cruiser, Noblesse.”

Marquis Martin laughed as he pointed towards a huge ship 2~3 times the Silver Star.

Still, Marquis Martin was one of the main powerhouses in the Galactic Federation. Marquis Martin wouldn’t have obtained that position if he was careless. He had prepared a pilot with a spectacular career and 60 special guards. And now the hero of the Galactic Federation, Ark was joining as well!

“The coordinates are X-235, Y-1078. Depart with maximum speed!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The space cruiser emitted flames and flew across the universe.

And.....

“...Dammit.”

Ark's lips twisted.

Marquis Martin's private cruiser was definitely cutting edge. Ikyullos was approximately 10,000 light years away from Istana. It would take a minimum of 4 hours even when taking proper advantage of the universe stream. However, Noblesse took only 3 hours to travel 10,000 light years!

Despite travelling at that type of speed, the ship was so comfortable that he couldn't feel the vibration. This was the difference between a pioneer and noble's spaceship. Even the name Noblesse showed an unacceptable bourgeois!

However, Ark wasn't cursing because of the huge difference between rich and poor.

It was the thing right in front of him. No, it was because of the 'unseen' object. Noblesse had arrived at the place where Ikyullos was supposed to be after 3 hours. But just like the 3D image, there was nothing at the coordinates including space debris.

“Are you sure this is the place?”

It was no wonder that he was suspicious. However, the pilot of Noblesse resolutely shook his head.

“Yes, there isn't a problem with the navigation system. I looked at the absolute coordinates on the map and calculated the distance and angle to recalculate the current location and this is definitely the coordinates for Ikyullos.”

“It is ridiculous.”

Marquis Martin murmured with a mixed voice. However, Marquis Martin had a reason for this. Noblesse had already arrived here for 30 minutes.

In the meantime, Marquis Martin had used various equipment to explore the area. Gravity field, magnetic field, infrared rays, ultraviolet rays, *etc.* All the possible data figures showed normal results. It really was like a ghost.

‘....Why did this happen?’

Ark couldn’t understand it.

Planets had vanished without a trace. The 3 powers and Council investigated and couldn’t figure out the answer so they kept it quiet.

Therefore he came to investigate directly. The 3 powers and the Council hadn’t investigated properly. They couldn’t investigate properly. An investigation would be detected.

So pioneers just dismissed it as insane ghost stories. In this situation, Ark’s planet Ikyullos had become one of those ghost stories.

Ark shook his head at the thought.

‘Don’t make me laugh! What ghost? This is Ikyullos!’

But Ark couldn’t see it!

‘This is the universe in the 24th century. Something like a ghost? There should be some signs left behind if Ikyullos disappeared. It isn’t a small rock but a planet! A mass that large wouldn’t vanish without a trail! Yes, I can’t give up yet. The trail just hasn’t been found yet. It is obviously hiding somewhere around here. I won’t quit until I find it!’

Ark had no intention of giving up. No, he couldn’t give up. If he gave up then he would lose his planet. But he wasn’t alone. If Ark refused to give up then Marquis Martin would be floating in this space for a long time. If a clue wasn’t found then it was inevitable that they would return to Istana.

‘Still, I can return here with the Silver Star after rescuing the Silver Hand. But

the equipment on the Silver Star is nothing compared to the Noblesse. If this ship can't find it then it is impossible for the Silver Star.'

This was Ark's first and last chance to find a clue. But as time passed, hope and expectation only turned to disappointment and despair. Ark was halfway to giving up after exploring for 1 hour.

Marquis Martin narrowed his eyes and spoke in a low voice.

".....Something is different."

"Huh?"

"You didn't feel it?"

Marquis Martin asked Ark. Marquis Martin clicked his tongue and continued talking.

"As I thought, you are still quite young. Indeed, you've only entered the universe for 1 year so you can't feel it yet."

"Feel? What is it?"

Ark couldn't understand what Marquis Martin was saying. However, Marquis Martin ignored Ark's '?' and shouted towards the pilot.

"Hoksullo, pull up the flight data. There is a point where it obviously fluctuated for a few seconds."

"I'll examine it."

Hoksullo replied as he quickly pressed some buttons on the dashboard.

"I've checked the system fluctuations....no, there it is. It was so weak the system's navigation didn't detect it but the spaceship's speed accelerated by 0.03 seconds."

"...Indeed!"

Marquis Martin's eyes shone at Hoksullo's report.

But Ark still couldn't understand what Marquis Martin had detected. No, Ark didn't even know the speed had accelerated before Hoksullo spoke.

It wasn't just Ark. Hoksullo hadn't noticed until Marquis Martin's command. Even the ship's navigation system found it hard to detect the increase of 0.03 seconds.

However, Marquis Martin had been confident. Marquis Martin laughed at Ark's incredulous expression.

"It is hard to explain with words. Let's just say it is some type of resistance?"

"Resistance?"

"Yes, it happens when the density of space changes. But there is no certainly. It is momentary. But that feeling occurred just before. And like Hoksullo said, it is momentary but the spaceship sped up. Hoksullo, was the engine output the same?"

"Of course."

"Did you hear? The engine output was the same but the speed changed. There is nothing in that space. It is very marginal but we just sailed through a space with a different density. The resistance affected the speed of the ship. And as for the space we sailed through...."

"It was Ikyullos!"

Ark raised his head and shouted. Marquis Martin nodded.

"Yes, it means that Ikyullos is still located here. It is invisible and the exploration equipment can't detect it but there is definitely something there. I still can't think of an explanation for Ikyullos' disappearance. Since it can't be confirmed with eyes or the exploration equipment....it might've been better to

deal with a ghost.”

Then an ‘!’ popped into Ark’s head.

So far, Ark thought that Ikyullos vanished through some physical force. Therefore he had been thinking of physical methods. In other words, he had to rely on exploratory equipment. It disappeared with physical force so he thought that physical traces would remain.

But that changed after hearing Marquis Martin’s words.

And a skill naturally floated in his head. The Hajaska rune that he learnt on Inquiry! It could reveal unseen forces that the Silver Star’s equipment didn’t detect. And if Ikyullos was made to disappear similar to the ghost planet, wasn’t it done by some unknown third power in the galaxy?

“Come out, Shire! Hajaska Rune!”

Ark used Rune Carving. Lights engulfed his hand and he used the Shire to draw a rune. Ark’s turned his shining blue eyes to look out the window.

A baffled exclamation fell from Ark’s mouth.

“T-this is.....”

Kwaaaaaaah!

Winds blew and the atmosphere fluctuated.

A huge ring of light then scattered the clouds. Sparks flew from the ring of light and a silver spaceship appeared.

“We’ve arrived at our destination!”

“Okay. Fix the engine to the current position.”

The person giving orders in the captain’s seat was Rapid. After Rapid had

been delegated the command of the Silver Star, he immediately headed to the Vesta area where Clem had sent his SOS. But Vesta was a wide jungle beyond imagination.

-Vesta Dungeon Area.

On the other hand, they had no clues about the location of the Silver Hand.

“Damn, that Ark didn’t give any proper information. They didn’t even send coordinates along with the rescue request. Aren’t they in a really desperate situation? It is his fault if we are in the wrong location.”

Rapid murmured with a worried expression. Clem was too desperate to send coordinates but Rapid blamed him since they would be wandering the vast jungle. But Ark had left him in charge.

So even if he wanted to quit in the middle....

‘That Ark bastard, I need to rescue them safely in order to beat him. He will treat me like an idiot if I can’t properly handle this task. I can’t listen to his lecture.’

This was the reason why Rapid displayed his patience. He might be Ark’s employee but Ark entrusting him with this task meant he was viewed as a competent user.

‘According to Ark, the Silver Hand moves using a container truck. The truck is used to move large equipment through the jungle. And there should be some evidence unless they intentionally erased their tracks. Then if we find the container truck then we can easily find the dungeon.’

“Hegel, use the optical scanner!”

Rapid used the optical scanner to examine Vesta’s terrain. The optical scanner

narrowed the focus and could soon find traces of a truck passing by.

The Silver Star followed that trail.

“Rapid-nim!”

Hegel turned his head and shouted.

“Look at monitor no. 2! That is clearly the Silver Hand’s container truck!”

“Any bio reaction?”

“Nothing.”

“Has everyone gone into the cave below?”

Rapid narrowed his eyes as he looked at the monitor.

The monitor showed a truck disguised with bushes. The area in front was covered in vines and underneath the vines was a wide, empty space. It was a large hole leading underground that was covered in vines.

“Should we land?”

“No, it isn’t necessary. Milan, switch the Silver Star to turret mode and aim towards the vine area.”

“Yes. Silver Star, launch shells!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Milan manipulated the Silver Star and beams of light shot downwards. And the vine were enveloped in flames, revealing an enormous hole. The hole could even allow the Silver Star to pass through.

“There is a convenient route so there is no need to go the hard way.”

Rapid laughed before saying to Milan.

“Milan, lead the Silver Star to enter the cave. The width is uneven so pay close

attention. I don't want to hear Ark's complaints if there are marks on the Silver Star."

"I understand."

Milan nodded with a tense expression. The Silver Star descended through the enormous hole and travelled approximately 100 metres. And light slowly revealed a cave.

Hegel who was watching the radar suddenly flinched.

"Rapid-nim, movement is detected!"

"Movement? People?"

"No, not a person. Much larger....at least 10 metres....heok!"

"What? What's going on?"

"There isn't just one! Dozens, no hundreds of movement is being detected! 200 metres away from the Silver Star and moving at a rapid pace! 180 metres! 170! 160...."

"Damn. Kurakan, Ferguson, A and B, automatically fire at the monsters. Kurakan and A will move to the upper turrets while Ferguson and B head to the lower turrets to prepare for the combat situation!"

"120! 110....they will soon enter the line of sight.

Hegel's shout came shortly afterwards.

Rapid turned his head and saw shadows approaching the Silver Star. The Silver Star was instantly covered in black shadows.

Space 2: Disappearance

SPACE 2. Disappearance

“Ikyullos?”

“Yes, it is obviously in front of us!”

Ark replied with eyes surrounded by a blue light.

Ark’s eyes were looking out the window of the spaceship. A huge sphere was floating in the space where nothing was present before. The brown and blue mixed sphere was the planet Ikyullos that he had seen in a previous 3D image.

The Ikyullos that vanished had appeared after he used the Hajaska rune. However, Marquis Martin and his crew just had ‘?’ in their eyes as they stared at the same place. It was invisible in their eyes.

“But....”

Marquis Martin looked at Ark’s eyes that were emitting a blue light.

“This isn’t nonsense.”

And his lips rose in a smile as he spoke.

“Bringing you seems to be the right choice.”

Marquis Martin accepted the absurd situation with no resistance. Well, Martin was still a NPC that was part of the system. Rather, it was easy to accept the situation after seeing Ark’s eyes.

‘W-what the hell is this? Why is Ikyullos in front of me? So Ikyullos wasn’t missing but in some type of stealth state? No, that isn’t stealth. The exploration devices would pick up on the stealth devices. Furthermore, the probes had

passed through the area where Ikyullos was several times. The probe should've showed some indication that it made contact with the atmosphere. But there have been no signs as time passed. It is like the ghost planet....'

The ghost planet hadn't reacted to any exploration devices. The difference was that the ghost planet could be seen and Ikyullos couldn't. And the whole planet seemed to be in the grip of a red gas.

'What is going on here?'

A number of questions crossed through Ark's mind.

But he could figure things out just looking with his eyes. The issue happening to Ikyullos at the moment probably had something to do with the red gas. It drifted like a ghost and might be the cause of the other disappearing planets.

But it was just there. The spaceship couldn't even make contact with the gas. In addition, the exploration devices couldn't detect anything so there was no way to obtain more information. No, Ark was feeling panicked as he saw a scene he couldn't imagine.

Then Marquis Martin's voice shook his ears.

"Ark, what are you doing?"

"Huh?"

"Right now you can see Ikyullos. Then why are you just staring with a stupid expression? Report on the situation. If you can see a perfectly good planet then it must be in contact with something. Then shouldn't you give a proper explanation about everything you see?"

Ark was lifted from his thoughts and explained what he saw.

"I don't know what it is but Ikyullos is currently in the grip of a red gas. And a black space in the centre...it looks like a sunspot. It is faint but there are a bunch

of lights tangled together in a mess.

“Sunspot? Where?”

“3 o’clock direction, 50 km away.”

“Hoksullo, move the ship to the place that Ark mentioned.”

Marquis Martin was practical and quickly took control of the situation. And....

“It is useless to think too hard if the exploration equipment can’t detect it. If we beat it then it will become visible. Fay, switch the Noblesse to battle mode. Maximum output, charge the energy and fire towards the place Ark specified!”

“Energy charge is complete! Waiting on your command!”

“Fire!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

.... It was more intense than he imagined. There was a large amount of heat as Noblesse’s gun were fired.

“The photon particles have disappeared into thin air!”

“The energy of the gun has been completely extinguished 300 kilometres ahead!”

The light extending into space reached a certain point and vanished. No, Marquis Martin and the crew had misconstrued the situation.

A different scene had occurred in Ark’s eyes.

The gun had reached the sunspot and caused lightning to start furiously pounding it. And the next moment, a giant tentacle stretched out from the centre and headed towards the Noblesse.

“There is a reaction! Ark, report on the situation!”

“T-that....”

Kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Chwajijijijik!

There was a loud noise and the Noblesse started rattling.

“Marquis-nim, it is an emergency! Some unseen force has hit the ship! The tremendous pressure has damaged the shield! But I can’t determine the form of the power!”

“Ark!”

“Tentacle! It is a tentacle! A tentacle emerged from the sunspot on Ikyullos after being hit by the gun and wounded the Noblesse!”

“Tentacles....”

Marquis Martin murmured with a surprised expression. Then Hoksullo cried out again.

“Marquis-nim, the Noblesse is being pulled forward by an unknown force!”

“Dammit! Increase the maximum output of the engine!”

“The engine output is at the maximum! But we’re not moving! Hat! S-shield has been destroyed! An unidentified pressure is crushing the armour! It won’t last long in this condition!”

“Fools, don’t panic!”

Marquis Martin shouted in a harsh voice.

“Whatever it is, it sat tight until we attacked. It felt threatened by the Noblesse and attacked. In other words, the weapons of the Noblesse works against it. Then it is an opponent we can fight. And the best defense is attack! Fay, open all the guns of the Noblesse. Pour the photon guns towards the area where it disappeared!”

“Noblesse! Firearms are operating! The aim is fixed! Fire!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Pepeng! Pepeng!

Hundreds of attacks flew forward at Marquis Martin’s command. The crew couldn’t see it but Ark’s eyes saw the violent turbulence of the tentacles every time it was hit. Like Marquis Martin said, it was receiving damage.

Then after a moment.

The area in front of the Noblesse started convulsing. A hazy image that occurred. Tentacles wrapped in flames were wound around the Noblesse. The bombardment had started to reveal the form of ‘it’ that was on Ikyullos.

They were confused when fighting with something invisible but they became shocked as it started to appear. The crew members stuttered with a stiff expression.

“W-what is going on?”

“W-why is such a thing....”

“Oh my god! That thing is wound around the Noblesse?”

“I’d rather it was just a ghost story.”

Those last words belonged to Marquis Martin. But even in such a situation, Marquis Martin didn’t feel embarrassment or fear. His lips were distorted but it seemed to be from excitement rather than nervousness. Marquis Martin looked at the black spot with cold eyes.

“That...it is angry.”

“Huh?”

“I can see it. It is angry and that is why the Noblesse is being attacked.”

Ark thought that Marquis Martin was sick.

.....Mainly in the head.

No one in their right mind would feel excited when their ship was being surrounded by an unknown creature that hid a planet. However, Marquis Martin could calmly grasp the situation.

“Hoksullo, turn off the Noblesse’s automatic gas control device! And increase the nozzle of the right wing to the maximum angle! Switch the nozzle of the left wing to the maximum downward angle! The angle of the right player is 45 degrees! The angle of the left stern is 45 degrees! As soon as the adjustments are made, increase the maximum output to all engines!”

“Huh? B-but doing something like that in this state....”

“Shut up and do as I say!”

“U-understood!”

Hoksullo hurriedly moved his hands after Marquis Martin yelled.

Meanwhile, there were intermittent sounds as the armour of the Noblesse was twisted. The armour was unable to hold against the pressure of the tentacles and started breaking. Then Hoksullo who was manipulating the throttle paused and shouted.

“Marquis-nim, all the preparations are complete!”

“Maximum output to the engine!”

Hwaaaaaack!

Then flames appeared from all directions from the Noblesse’s engines. The Noblesse then started shaking up, down, left and right like an angry buffalo. It was natural. The gas nozzles were aimed in different directions and all of them were firing.

If this had been done with a normal crew then they would be slamming into

the floor and walls. But the Noblesse was currently being restrained by the tentacles. The tentacles acted as a safety belt for the Noblesse. Due to the Noblesse vibrating, the tentacles slightly loosened.

“How about it? This force is known as break force.”

Marquis Martin smiled and said.

“Now! Turn 30 degrees to the left!”

The Noblesse turned to the left at Martin’s words. And a giant tentacle appeared in the Noblesse’s front window.

“Gun fire!”

Kukwakwakwakwa!

And light exploded towards the tentacles! The rays that exploded from the Noblesse melted over half of the tentacles. And gunfire from the rear also broke the restraints.

This was what Marquis Martin had aimed for! Use the engines to change the angle and concentrate the heavy firepower on the tentacles.

“That’s it! Noblesse, reverse at full speed!”

And the operation was a great success! The tentacles were cut off and the Noblesse reversed.

More tentacles stretched out from the sunspot.

“Marquis-nim, the tentacles are coming again!”

“Dammit, those weren’t the only ones? Deploy the evasive action!”

And the battle between the tentacles and the space cruiser began. Martin and the crew couldn’t see the sunspot but several tentacles hundreds of kilometres in length were heading towards the Noblesse.

However, the crew of the Noblesse weren't easy opponents. Marquis Martin was head of the influential military faction so the pilot and crew weren't ordinary. The capacity of the crew showed in the movements of the Noblesse. The 10,000 ton class cruiser moved swiftly and poured out gunfire! Many tentacles were avoided.

However, it didn't stay like that.

"Ack, the ignition of the left engine is turning away!"

"There are intermittent errors in some of the secondary systems. Perhaps the damage received from the tentacles was larger than we thought."

The Noblesse had been damaged before the fight properly started. There were a few minor problems as the fierce battle kicked off. This would build up and could become a critical problem. Especially if it became a distraction during the battle.

Kwa kwang!

"A shock to the stern!"

In the end, the stern of the Noblesse was struck by the tentacles. At the same time, the situation rapidly deteriorated. Once the Noblesse lost its balance, it was hit several more times by the tentacles.

Kwajik, kwajik! Pepepeng!

Explosions occurred in several places as there was the sound of the armour being crushed.

"Marquis-nim, the pressure of the tentacles on the armour isn't decreasing! The gas control system has been destroyed! Error in the firearms control system! The Noblesse can't be controlled! If this continues then the ether fusion engine won't survive the pressure and will explode! The ether fusion

engine....”

“Can the Noblesse only last up to here?”

Marquis Martin gritted his teeth together.

“I didn’t expect to encounter a dirty creature like this. But it is useless for my pride to dwell on this or I will just die a dog’s death. Hoksullo, send a SOS to the western border headquarters. Fay, open the emergency doors in the rear of the ship. All the crew on-board the Noblesse will escape in the emergency pods as soon as the doors are open!”

“M-Marquis-nim?”

“Hey, what? What’s with that expression?”

Marquis Martin laughed as he looked at Hoksullo’s face.

“The captain of the battleship can’t just run away. I’d rather face the battleship’s destiny with it. Did you expect me to say something like that? Don’t be ridiculous. I am Martin. My life isn’t cheap enough to be swapped with a cruiser. But I am a noble so I will wait until all of the crew members have escaped. So put aside useless thoughts and hurry!”

Marquis Martin then turned to Ark.

“Why aren’t you doing?”

“I will escape with Marquis-nim.”

Ark replied with resolute eyes as he faced Marquis Martin.

Marquis Martin’s presence was like a small guardian to Ark. If Marquis Martin died then Ark would lose one of his most important contacts. How could he leave Marquis Martin alone when he was planning to escape at the last moment?

Martin had a slight smile as he looked at Ark.

“Good posture. My appreciation has gone up a little bit.”

This wasn’t a joke.

-Intimacy with Marquis Martin has increased by 150!

Marquis Martin’s appreciation had risen.

-Emergency! Emergency! All of the crew to escape using the emergency pods!

Meanwhile, the lights flashed as the command to escape was given. The crew’s monitor changed to showing a scene in the hangar. Flames were rising in all directions as the crew moved methodically. And a few emergency sphere shaped pods were thrown out of the Noblesse.

“Hoksullo, not yet?”

“It is almost done. But some of the communication circuits have been overloaded so I can’t be sure the broadcast reached all areas. If I want to check then I’ll have to reboot the entire communications system. Marquis-nim, please escape first!”

“Stupid fool, haven’t you realized yet? There is no time left. A ringing sound if coming from the engine. The rest will have to find a chance to escape. Ark, get that bastard! Let’s go!”

Marquis Martin shouted and turned towards Fay.

Ark grabbed Hoksullo and ran across the deck with Marquis Martin as the ship shook ominously. And once Hoksullo was shoved into an emergency pod, Marquis Martin shouted from 10 metres away.

“Move towards the specified position after escaping from the Noblesse!”

And finally he boarded the emergency pod.

-Boarding okay! Eject!

Pepeng!

The emergency pod that looked like a small sphere was thrown out of the Noblesse.

He looked out the small window at dozens of other emergency pods and the Noblesse. But he didn't move as Marquis Martin commanded.

-Warning! Warning! The system of the emergency pod is out of control!

Dozens of emergency pods had escaped from the sinking Noblesse. They rushed towards the sunspot instead of the planned location.

Western area of the Galactic Federation.

Tens of thousands of asteroids were scattered around a safe place. Five asteroids were connected with thick pipes to form a pentagon. And in the centre was a huge metal object with a honeycomb like structure.

This structure was the western border headquarters. It was also known as the Pentagon.

And right now, there was an urgent mood inside the Pentagon. The Pentagon's central control room had 10 people gathered while looking at a large screen.

Stars were attached to their shoulders! The commanders, generals and nobles on the western border were gathered in one place in the Pentagon. The reason was something that flew towards the Pentagon a short time ago.

"Commander, is that true?"

“Just listen.”

A young commander replied to the question of an elderly nobleman in a calm tone. And he nodded towards a man's face on the screen. The voice was hard to hear but some parts were audible.

–This is the Noblesse....Marquis Martin....currently....engaged in battle....serious hull damage....won't survive long....attempted evacuation....as soon as you receive this.....send help.....

“M-Marquis Martin?”

“Oh my god!”

Confusion spread on the faces of the nobles gathered.

Marquis Martin was the head of the military faction and a military advisor. Yet Marquis Martin was engaged in hostilities with someone and was trying to escape. This event occurred inside the area of the Galactic Federation. In any case, there would be a tremendous upheaval after this event.

The nobles began buzzing as soon as the video ended.

“What is going on?”

“The current status? Did Marquis Martin survive?”

“Everyone please calm down!”

Then a voice was heard from among the nobles.

They split apart and the owner of the voice, a man in his 50's walked through. He had a small body for a human in the 24th century but an overwhelming atmosphere was around him.

The commander bowed slightly as the man approached.

“Earl Weston-nim.”

Weston clicked his tongue as he looked at the nobles.

“Should active duty soldiers be getting confused like this?”

“But Earl-nim, the person who sent the request is none other than Marquis Martin-nim.”

“Then shouldn’t you respond more calmly?”

“Y-yes but....”

“We should check the facts.”

Earl Weston turned back to the commander.

“Commander, I never heard that Marquis Martin was heading towards that area. Are you sure it was really sent by the Noblesse?”

“The communications security code is correct. And it was confirmed from Istana that Marquis Martin-nim left Sidellin on the Noblesse.”

“Was it a business matter?”

“I couldn’t confirm it.”

“Not informing the military when going on a voyage.....”

Weston rubbed his white sideburns with his fingertips and muttered. And he thought for a moment before raising his eyes.

“Have you sent any professionals”

“It was already an emergency when they sent the request. Perhaps because it has already been sunk but the coordinates of the Noblesse couldn’t be obtained. I’ve mobilized several ways to track the source and determined that they are approximately near the 30 degrees latitude on the western border.....”

“Isn’t that a wide area that needs to be searched?”

Weston sighed with frustration.

It was an asteroid belt but the actual size was many light years large. Of course, a spaceship could move 1000~1500 light years in an hour but this was a rescue mission. They needed to look for emergency pods that had escaped from the sinking spaceship. A warp sail couldn't be used when searching a large area.

“Well, that’s if we can find it.”

“What does that mean?”

“You still don’t understand?”

Weston frowned at the question from a young nobleman.

“The cruiser with the best specifications belonging to the highest ranking official in the military was sunk in a surprise attack near the border of the Galactic Federation. . Do you think this is something space monsters or pirates are capable of?”

“Then Lieutenant General....?”

“You can’t come to a conclusion yet. But the only thing I can think of is that someone aimed at him. Depending on the result....”

The nobles held their breaths at Weston’s words.

They didn’t dare say it but everyone knew what he meant.

“We can only hope that such a situation doesn’t happen. The first thing we need to do is mobilize people to find Marquis Martin. Commander, prepare all speedboats available right now. I will personally conduct the search operation.”

“W-what?”

A space not far from the Pentagon.

An unusual long, cylindrical spaceship was floating.

Sorin, the owner of the ship was a popular game scoop reporter. The exclusive game scoops news had placed facilities in each of the 3 powers and space frontier in order to deliver news to the audience faster. And Sorin was one of these reporters. It was also due to the unusual spaceship. The ship itself was a giant telescope.

And the telescope had just picked up on an amazing scene. A swarm of spaceships suddenly came pouring out of the Galactic Federation’s western headquarters. The ship that was in the front. It was the size of a carrier spaceship.

“What the hell is going on? Training? No, this is too weird to be a training fleet. Aren’t there hundreds of high speed patrol ships? I’ve never heard of this during training. Moreover, this number seems to indicate that all of the speedboats in the Pentagon have been mobilized. Speedboats will be occasionally used during training but not to this degree.”

Like most men in South Korea, Sorin had been in the army. Sorin had a military post so he understood something the moment he saw the fleet that left the Pentagon. He didn’t know what it was but something big had happened. And he was a journalist.

“.....A scoop!”

Sorin laughed as he knocked on the dashboard. And his ship started chasing after the fleet.

“Status?”

“It doesn’t look that serious. Fortunately there was no major damage to the armour and main systems. The durability of the armour has strengthened after

the upgrade the other day. But the flying wings on both sides are damaged. It is possible to recover with the automated recovery system but it will take at least 5~6 hours.”

Hegel replied while wiping his grease stained hands.

“5~5 hours.....”

Rapid frowned as he looked at the Silver Star. The Silver Star that had landed among hundreds of trees had changed into a rag.

Immediately after entering the cave found in Vesta, they had received a surprise attack from flying monsters. But like Hegel reported, the condition wasn't that severe.

In fact, it was an almost one-sided battle. The Silver Star's armour was a mess due to the flesh and blood of the monsters slain. However, the number of monsters was so large that the Silver Star had no choice but to receive some damage and eventually crash landed. The damage to the wings on both sides occurred at that time.

Well, he honestly didn't care about the Silver Star but....

“Sheesh, if that Ark finds out about this then he will nag me again.”

“Will Hyung-nim come in 5~6 hours?”

“I don't want him to come. It will be better if we die together.”

Hegel scratched his head at Rapid's brusque tone.

Hegel had joined Ark's Royal Guards on Beltana. Moreover, he was one of the members who had a reason for his incredible loyalty to Ark. If any other person talked like that about Ark then he would be furious. However, Hegel was aware of it after Rapid joined the investigation team quest.

Ark and Rapid had a relationship that could be called 'original.'

“If Milan and I work on it then the repair time can be reduced by half.”

“I don’t know what will happen if the flying mob comes again so we need to repair it as quickly as possible. We also need to use a base camp.”

Rapid replied.

The Silver Star had crash landed in a place with dense fog. Of course, there was no way to tell what type of place this was. Rapid knew that they were deep underneath Vesta but it was hard to believe.

‘For this space to be underground....’

It was like a dense jungle with greenery and fog. Furthermore, it was a place where communication waves couldn’t be caught.

‘It has become troublesome. Searching a place like this will take longer than expected. I don’t care about the Silver Hand and Royal Guards but I don’t want to see that Ark bastard’s face.’

Rapid wasn’t stupid. No, he was a fairly smart user.

He knew that Ark’s words had been meant to scratch his ego. And thinking about Ark made he want to deliberately fail the quest.

Unfortunately, Rapid’s pride was too strong. His pride wouldn’t tolerate a failure. No, it was simple and easy if he wanted to deliberately fail. He didn’t want to see the look on that person’s face.

But now the situation seemed to be harder than expected. And he would aim for success in difficult situations. If he said he ‘deliberately failed’ then the other person would just take it as an excuse. That was unacceptable!

‘I will do whatever it takes to end this before Ark comes!’

And he would say indifferently when Ark arrived. A look that said ‘heh, you are too late.’

‘Yes! This! I will go with this route!’

Rapid used a strange method to motivate himself.

Anyway, Rapid looked at the crew gathered in front of the Silver Star.

“As you are already aware, communication isn’t possible in this place. We can’t sit back and wait for the people needing help to contact us. So we will use the Silver Star as a base camp and slowly investigate the scope of the search as we navigate the terrain. There is a thick fog but you don’t have to worry about getting lost if you move in a straight line. There is no time so I will divide you into teams.”

“Hey, wait a minute.”

Then one of the monkeys spoke up. That monkey was called Ferguson.

“Why are you naturally giving commands? The situation is like this. If the original leader of the team isn’t here, shouldn’t it be natural for the strongest person after Ark to give commands?”

“What are you saying? Hyung-nim said before leaving....”

“It doesn’t matter. I will listen.”

Rapid stopped Kurakan before speaking to Ferguson.

“So? Is that person supposed to be you?”

“Well, I can’t say that for certain. But I was once a person who reached the 18th rank among users in the game scoop rankings.”

“Really? Amazing. So why has such a person been digging in the meantime?”

“Eh? T-that....”

Ferguson rolled his eyes with a slightly confused expression. And he replied with a nod.

“Hobby! Yes, it is a hobby!”

“Hyung-nim.....”

A and B gazed at Ferguson with embarrassed eyes.

Rapid looked at Ferguson, A and B with a fascinated expression.

“Yes, it was a hobby. I didn’t know. Okay, I am willing to give you a chance to become the leader. I don’t know about this user rankings but you seem confident in your skills. I will see if you are capable of being the leader. So, what do you think we should do?”

Rapid thought.

His pride was moving as Ark intended but he disliked Ark. However, Ferguson had come out and offered to be the leader. There was no reason for Rapid to take charge. He would have a good excuse even if they failed.

Ferguson didn’t know the reason for Rapid’s cavalier attitude and said with an arrogant expression.

“I think there is no need to move. Like you said, communication in this place is jammed and the visibility is limited so there are too many uncertain factors. We made an emergency landing here due to an unexpected attack from flying monsters. So it is better to wait by the Silver Star until Ark arrives.”

Ferguson thought about it.

He didn’t want to go back to that hell that was the gallstone dungeon. But they had to follow Ark due to personal circumstances. It was due to their sin in New World. Now that Ferguson and his brothers were in such a poor condition, they could only show off their usefulness to Ark.

This quest was the change that Ferguson had been waiting for! Ferguson, A and B were prepared to use all their strength to give a great performance.

But Ark had been diverted by something else. In this situation, Ark wouldn't know what had happened. If the mission succeeded then Rapid would be the leader. And Ferguson, A and B had a high chance of returning to digging in that hell.

That's why Ferguson wanted to become the leader and wait for Ark to come. Then Ark wouldn't be able to overlook him.

Rapid made an unpleasant expression and said.

"The situation is the same but you won't be worried if Ark was the leader instead of me?"

"I recognize Ark's skill."

Milan, Hegel and Ellain all followed Ark. It was necessary to make the NPCs notice how much he admired Ark so they could mention it to him.

But Ferguson didn't know one thing. He had been digging the entire time in S-20 so it was natural that he didn't realize the relationship between Ark and Rapid.

So it was over.

"Ah, of course I know your heart. You aren't one of Ark's original subordinates. So I understand that you want to receive praise from Ark. But excessive loyalty can also be upsetting. With...."

Cheolkeok.

The nozzle of a gun was then pushed under Ferguson's nose. Ferguson withdrew at the sudden situation. No, Rapid had grabbed Ferguson's thick neck and stuffed in the gun in his nostrils the moment he tried to retreat.

"Say one more word. I will drill another hole for you to breathe with.

"Cough! W-why? Y-you might not like my words. But we are both Ark's

subordinates....”

“...I’m going to do it.”

“Ugh! Rapid hyung, stop!”

Hegel who had been staying out of it finally spoke. Rapid wasn’t someone who would listen to Hegel. So the monkey just had one of his nostrils stretched even further. A and B shouted as Ferguson got his nostrils pulled even further due to Hegel.

“T-this is crazy! What are you doing?”

“Rapid-nim’s actions are a little excessive but....”

Then Ellain started talking.

“Ark-nim entrusted the team to Rapid-nim. Ark-nim’s decision is absolute. This isn’t subject to individual circumstances. And waiting for Ark is contrary to his opinion. Ark entrusted us to his mission because he believed that we are capable. We can’t just sit here polishing our swords.”

“Ohh! I agree.”

Kurakan nodded as he lifted a piece of iron.

“We finally came to a place like this so I want to make my neo M-620 cry!”

“And.....”

Ellain grinned while grabbing the hilt of his sword. And he pulled out his sword and spun his body around.

“The ones that are already here won’t wait for Ark to arrive.”

Kung! Kung! Kung! Kung!

Roars could be heard from the jungle wrapped in fog.

Space 3: Unknown Planet?

SPACE 3. Unknown Planet?

Hwiooooo!

Rough winds stirred. Grains of sand were mixed with blue glass.

A jolt of pain was felt directly on his skin. The visibility was limited but he could see through the faceguard of the helmet.

“Was it originally like this? Or....”

Ark lifted his head from the ground.

The sky was covered in a black curtain. But it wasn't night. In fact, Ark's current place wasn't completely dark. It wasn't bright but it was like a dreary, grey day. The sky might be dark but there were no stars. Ark could guess why.

“I think this is definitely....”

They had escaped the exploded Noblesse in the emergency pods.

The emergency pods were captured by a magnetic force and sucked into the sunspot. They tried to change the direction several times to no avail.

And....dozens of emergency pods were swallowed up in darkness. Ark naturally thought it was GAME OVER.

But in the next moment, the veiled window became brighter. Ark was now standing on a glassy blue surface covered with coarse sand and rocks.

“Considering the situation, the black curtain covering the sky of Ikyullos is the sunspot. In other words, we passed through the sunspot and arrived on Ikyullos.”

Of course, there were many unsolved doubts about this.

When the Noblesse was investigating, it couldn't even touch Ikyullos. So why had their emergency pods landed on Ikyullos? No, why was Ikyullos in such a state? Was it the effect of the gas covering Ikyullos? Why had tentacles emerged from the sunspot in order to attack the Noblesse?

There was an endless procession of '?'.

"But no matter how hard I think, an answer won't emerge. And that isn't important right now. We need to survive here. That is the priority."

Ark turned and headed down the hill. And while crossing the terrain, a pit appeared. A metal sphere was half buried in the ground. It was the emergency pod that Ark rode in.

The emergency hatch was open and one man was messing with a machine in front of it. It was Hoksullo who had been riding the same emergency pod.

"Can you do something?"

"No. There is nothing visible."

"Indeed."

Hoksullo sighed and asked again.

"By the way, is this place Ikyullos?"

"I'm not sure but probably."

"What do you think? Will a rescue team be able to find us?"

"Uh....."

Before the ship exploded, a request had been sent to the western border's headquarters. The person who sent the request was none other than Marquis Martin, the head of the military faction. If the radio waves reached them then a

large scale search operation would take place. However, Ark was sceptical.

Ark was on Ikyullos for unexplained reasons but the planet was still in a missing state.

The crew of the Noblesse couldn't see the sunspot until the tentacles were revealed. But that was just a temporary phenomenon in order for the sunspot to damage the Noblesse. In fact, the black curtain covering the sky was drilled with many holes like it had been torn apart.

But that wasn't visible now. The wounds seem to have been healed and re-sealed in the meantime. In other words, it had returned to the original state before the fight with the Noblesse.

It was hard to identify but Ikyullos was probably back in its invisible state. It meant the rescue team was unlikely to find Ikyullos unless they had someone like Ark with the Hajaska rune.

“It isn't good.”

“But it is too early to give up.”

Ark said with a calm expression.

“Either way, we are still alive. And this is Ikyullos. We arrived here alive so there is a way to get out alive.”

“Ark-nim is strong.”

Hoksullo looked into his eyes with admiration. However, Ark had a reason to be sure. An information window had popped up before the emergency pod landed here.

<Unknown Planet>

You have crash landed on a planet that is in an invisible state for some reason. There is no information on why the planet is like this.

But you are a pioneer. There are numerous stars in the galaxy that are beyond human understanding. A pioneer exploring the galaxy needs to overcome these trials.

Do not lose courage. A true pioneer's weapons aren't swords, guns and spaceships. The indomitable courage that doesn't give up will allow you to find a way to escape the crisis.

Difficulty: A+

Quest!

In this situation, an outside quest had been registered. It meant this incident wasn't unexpected. A quest was registered in such a situation.

'Indeed, this incident happened because the entire planet disappeared. And the Noblesse was sunk. It might've been different if I was piloting the Silver Star but there was no room for me to interfere in the battle between the Noblesse and the tentacles. Of course, the crew of the Noblesse and Marquis Martin are all NPCs. And this situation took place due to the initiative of the NPCs....'

When looking at it from the position of a user, this was an event! In other words, the situation right now was an event.

Of course, variables existed such a Ark arriving here on the Silver Star, not having the Hajaska rune or the Ikyullos planet not disappearing but this was one of several scenarios prepared in the galaxy.

‘I shouldn’t have pessimistic thoughts in this situation. A quest was registered so this means there is a way to escape from Ikyullos.’

Ark was hopeful in a strange way.

....Anyway!

“The tests are over?”

“Yes, it is as expected. Like I said before, the sand of this planet seems to contain quite a lot of metals. The sand storm has also worsened the interference blocking the radio waves. Therefore the portable communications equipment has been jammed.”

“That means it is hard to locate the other emergency pods.”

Ark and Hoksullo weren’t the only ones who landed here.

All of the emergency escape pods from the Noblesse had been sucked into the sunspot. And they were likely to be alive like Ark. Therefore, the first thing he needed to do was join them. Hoksullo was fortunate in that regard.

Hoksullo was the senior pilot and signaller of the Noblesse. He could check the communications. Ark knew there was a device that indicated the location of the emergency pods scattered all over the place. However, Hoksullo said that the equipment wasn’t working properly due to the sandstorm.

“But it will work at a short distance.”

Hoksullo opened up again at Ark’s distressed expression.

“I checked it just now. The wide range radar won’t work due to the sandstorm but the short wave radar is operating normally. However, the range is

extremely narrow to 1 kilometre. But the emergency antenna and batteries will increase to 2~3 kilometres.”

“2~3 kilometres....”

Looking at the sunspot area, the range was hundreds of kilometres. Yet the radar would only work for 2~3 kilometres. It was lacking. But the sandstorm limited visibility so that area he could see was only a few hundred metres.

Furthermore, this quest had a time limit attached. What does that mean.....?

“Then let’s leave immediately.”

“Let’s check this out first.”

Hoksullo opened a white box.

-Emergency Supplies Box

<Space Food x 15>, <9mm General Purpose Bullets
x 10 Boxes>, <Recovery Ampoules x2>, <Flare x 5>,
<Grenade x 2>.....

Emergency supplies were available. Finding supplies in a place like this was a lifeline! He didn’t know how long it would take to escape so the most precious supply was food.

“15 space food. This is enough to endure for a few days....”

Hoksullo sighed with relief.

It would be enough when waiting to be rescued. If they moved around then they would become hungry more easily.

When thinking about the situation, it would take more than a few days to find Marquis Martin and the other crew members. It was a situation that would cause unease.

“We have to withstand it somehow. First we need to divide the supplies. Here it is.”

Hoksullo handed him 8 space foods. This was larger than his share. But he needed to give it up.

“No, I am fine.”

“Huh? Ah, perhaps you already have food?”

He did. He had 5 space foods. Before going into space, he always brought 20~30 space foods with him. However, the ship was now gone. His backpack only had enough space for 5 emergency food supplies.

But that wasn't the reason why Ark refused the food.

“I just found it.”

“Found it? What do you mean?”

“Here.”

Ark lifted his hand from his pocket. Then Hoksullo looked at what he was holding and screamed. A centipede like creature with 10 legs was held up.

“W-What is it? That?”

“I don't know what it is called.”

“No way....are you planning to eat it? Is this the first time you've seen an insect? Are you insane? Space worms are the most toxic insect. Eating space worms in the universe is foolish. Those lucky enough will just get abdominal pain and diarrhoea. You can die from brain disease, heart disease and diabetic

complications!”

Ark also knew that much. But brain disease, heart disease and diabetic complications had nothing to do with Ark. Even if the centipede caused these symptoms, Ark was the owner of the skill ‘Steel Stomach.’ And he had already tested it.

-You have consumed unrefined foods.

A toxic sensation has hit your tongue. However, Steel Stomach is able to neutralize the toxin and absorb the nutrients.

<Satiety +40%, Strength has increased by 10 for 10 minutes>

The result was no problem! He didn’t need to worry about food with ‘Steel Stomach.’ It also reached Lv. 2 so the additional nutrients increased strength by 10.

The insect food had a better effect than general space food. The biggest disadvantage of this skill was swallowing the disgusting insect. However, he had already overcome such psychological damage on Beltana.

‘I had forgotten this skill over time. Space food isn’t expensive but it costs 10 copper for one. Now only can I eat for free but it also raises my stats more than space food. So why haven’t I been using it?’

This wasn’t the old days of New World. Even if it was an insect, he was willing to eat it if it would save 10 copper. He had been a little lazy.

‘Yes, now my sprit has woken up. Despite being a sector manager, I am still nothing compared to Hawk and the Seven Swords. And I don’t know what the situation is on the planet. I need to be prepared. Even if there is food, I need to raise my Steel Stomach to Lv. 3.’

Ark was determined. But this was the result of his self-reflection.

“So Hoksullo-nim can keep all the food. The total sum is 20. This should be enough to last Hoksullo-nim a week.”

“Ah, Ark-nim....!”

Hoksullo burst out with confusion as he was handed the food. And he looked at Ark with a tearful expression.

“Even in the toughest situations, food is the difference between life and death! But to give me the food and eat insects that can poison you....to be honest, I was displeased when Marquis Martin-nim brought you along. I didn’t understand why. But now I know why Marquis-nim cares about Ark-nim. I am ashamed that I judged Ark-nim so early. I might serve Marquis-nim but now Ark-nim is like my hyung-nim!”

He said emotionally.

-Intimacy with Hoksullo has increased by 200!

His appreciation had risen vertically! The reason Ark ate the insects had nothing to do with Hoksullo’s imagination. Ark wasn’t the type of person to pour cold water on someone’s mood.

“I am ashamed to hear you talk like that. This is an unforeseen situation but is it at the level of life or death? If we join forces then we can overcome this. And being called Hyung-nim is too burdensome.”

“No! Isn’t this like handing over your life? Please accept me as your brother! If you don’t then I won’t take the food!”

“If you say so....”

Ark sighed and replied.

“Okay, I understand. Hoksullo, from now on I will think of you as a younger brother.”

“Thank you, Hyung-nim!”

Hoksullo said with a thrilled look.

Once the ranking was set, their relationship became positive. Hoksullo ripped up parts that could be added to the emergency communications equipment.

Meanwhile Ark....

Character Information Window			
Name	Ark (R-02788)	Level	153
Species	Human	Occupation	Elim’s Heir
Fame	24,730	Adventure	3,040
Health	3,600 (+575)	Mental Power	825 (+490)
Mana	0	Force	1,825
Strength	385 (+80)	Agility	415 (+128)
Stamina	605 (+115)	Wisdom	40 (+23)
Intelligence	395 (+98)	Luck	45 (+18)
Leadership	10		

* Title

Ignorant Destroyer (Wisdom -10, Strength +7,
Stamina +7)

Spatial Breakthrough (Strength, Agility, Stamina,
Wisdom, Intelligence, Luck +10) Beltana's Hero
(Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence,
Luck +3)

Athamas' Hero (Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom,
Intelligence, Luck +5)

Mediator (Wisdom, Intelligence +15)

* Set Item Effect (Strength, Agility, Stamina +10.
Defense +20)

* Contribution: Galactic Federation 27,520,
Aschulat 500

* Affiliation: Dark Eden (CEO)

*Body Coating: Survivor

+ Environmental adaptation increases by 50% due to the Survivor coating.

+ The Survivor coating reduces the drop rate of Satiety by 30%.

+ The Survivor coating will reduce fall damage by 50%.

+The 'Clairvoyance' effect of the Survivor coating is applied.

-Equipment Information Window-

Weapons:<Equalizer (Strength +15, Agility +10, Attack Speed +18%)>

Armour: <Hide Helmet (Camouflage function)>, <Baius Shield (Stamina +20, Resistance to energy weapons +50%, Golem summoning)>, <Harkenion Armour (Agility +30, 20% melee damage mitigation)>, <Belphegor's Pants (Stamina +20, Agility +20, King's Wrath)>, <Phantom Boots (Agility +30, Intelligence +20, Movement Speed +20%, Soul Sprint)> Jewellery: <Sheraton's Twilight (Intelligence +45)>, <Hot Wind

Ring (Fire resistance +30%, Agility +10)> Accessories:
<Charenjok's Token: Lv 3>, <Cheksun's Toolbox>,
<Recovery Ampoule>, <Battle Suit-Hyper Drone: Lv2>

His check was complete!

“Hyung-nim, everything is ready!”

“Okay, then let's depart!”

Ark and his new brother stepped into the sandstorm.

“Hey! Burum!”

The beginner zone R-14 was still bustling with crowds.

The users didn't know it properly but Burum was the elder of the Charenjok cleaning R-14's air circulation pipes. Burum who was holding a rag flinched as Cheksun approached him. He squinted at the activity log in Cheksun's hands and asked.

–What's wrong? Is there a problem?

“No, it isn't a problem but....”

Cheksun scratched his bald head and said.

“I've examined the activity log several times and it seems like the maintenance rate of the pipes are rising. This is a good thing but I'm confused. I was just wondering if you could explain the circumstances?”

–That matter....

Burum sighed before answering.

–*We need to survive.*

“This is too much.”

–*Huh?*

“I’ve worked here for over 10 years. You’ve been living in the pipes that entire time. Do you really think that I’m unaware of what you have been doing? Aren’t you operating a space bug hunting ground?”

–*T-that....*

Burum stuttered with an upset expression. Then Cheksun smiled and tapped Burum’s head.

“It is okay. I told you, I already knew. Wasn’t the person who started the hunting Ark? In fact, I knew it from the beginning. In other words, I’ve been turning a blind eye. The reason why? I’ve been mourning your plight. I am an official of the Galactic Federation but I honestly think it is too much. I’ve been trying to find information about how to help you. So I turned a blind eye when Ark helped create the illegal hunting ground.”

–*Ark.....*

The words reminded Burum of his old memories. Cheksun nodded and continued talking.

“Yes, that nostalgic expression. Indeed, I sometimes recall those times. I’ve worked here for 10 years but I’ve never seen someone with that type of spirit. Sometimes I hear things so apparently he is doing well.”

Cheksun look nostalgic for a moment before shaking his head.

“No, weren’t we talking about the activity log? I was wondering because of it. Haven’t you been making quite a lot since the paid hunting operation started? It should be enough to pay for the civil rights of the Charenjok so why are you still

cleaning the pipes? No, that isn't wrong. If you are going to do that then I will pretend not to notice."

—Cheksun-nim.....

Tears dripped down from Burum's eyes. Cheksun was embarrassed by Burum's reaction.

"Oh, this...why are you crying? Well, you must be impressed knowing that I've been pretended this whole time....aha, this is true...."

—That's not it!

"What? It's not?"

-We have a network! Sob! We are screwed!

Burum suddenly flopped down and shouted.

"A network? What do you mean? What network?"

—It is all due to Ark! Ark!

"Ark?"

Cheksun's eyes widened.

Tears dripped down his face as Burum explained the situation.

The origin of the incident occurred when he met two pioneers at the job market. Burum attracted these pioneers to the paid hunting ground. Yet the two of them had just started so they didn't even had 1 copper.

However, Burum accepted both men. After a short conversation with the two men, he learnt that they knew Ark. Ark was the person who created the paid hunting grounds on R-14.

The Charenjok were doomed until he stepped in. Since then, pioneers rushed to the paid hunting grounds on R-14 and they prospered. He decided the two

men could pay the entry fee after hunting the space bugs.

“So? Why would that relationship ruin the hunting ground?”

-....*They caught everything.*

“Eh?”

–*Those two guys caught all the space worms!*

Burum’s face was streaked with tears and ink.

The space bugs didn’t grow infinitely in space. This was originally a space bug farm. However, the Charenjok stole the eggs and raised the bugs for the paid hunting ground. Of course, the space bugs on R-14 were genetically modified to multiply faster but....

“Ohh, there are so many space bugs here? Good! This is the right place to loosen my body!”

A skinny man said.

“Well, isn’t this the facility to circulate the air of the space station? If the bugs are here then it can cause serious hygiene problems. For the health of the people who live here, I need to use all my strength to eradicate the bugs.”

These were the words of a muscular man. Burum didn’t realize the seriousness at this point.

–*Yes. Unlimited hunting. This is a place where you can do that.*

He even encouraged them. Now he wanted to rip out his lips that said that. But he really couldn’t imagine it.

At that time, the space worms were growing rapidly and needed to be reduced by quite a lot. But even so! Burum and the Charenjok woke up only to find them all gone! Two people had hunted overnight but all the space bugs had

been wiped out!

They were pioneers who just entered the universe!

“There should be quite a few space bugs so how many could they catch overnight?”

-At least 300 space bugs were caught!

“3-300? Two people caught 300 space bugs in one night? Oh my god! Is that possible?”

-It is possible and they did it! Those bastards! The guys called Isyuram and Justiceman. And the both of them only paid 1 gold each.

Burum shouted while coughing up blood.

—We worked hard to clean the pipes in order to live!

‘Damn, why is this.....?’

Ark looked around with annoyed eyes.

The sandstorm on Ikyullos was still continuing. He didn’t know whether this was the original weather or caused by the emergency pods of Marquis Martin and the other crew members landing.

The face guard protected his face from being hit by sand but his vision wasn’t perfectly secured. It also wasn’t easy to move. He was swept by strong winds so simple walking was a tough action. Therefore he was bound to consume more stamina and satiety.

Of course, Ark was the owner of Steel Stomach. He could put any creature into his mouth and endure for several months. However, Hoksullo’s durability was no match for Ark.

Immediately after Ark became his hyung-nim, he tried to eat a centipede and vomited.

“Ohh! I can’t even pretend to eat such a thing.”

-Hoksullo has looked at you with eyes of respect.

<Appreciation +30>

His respect for Ark rose again but....

‘He unnecessarily wasted food!’

Hoksullo’s satiety went down and he was also coughing blood. He needed to eat a few space foods to recover. In fact, right now Ark was most worried about the space food.

Of course, there were other emergency supplies. But that would increase when finding other emergency pods. It was the reason he was trying to find the emergency pods but the amount of emergency food wouldn’t increase.

Just walking in the sandstorm would reduce satiety. Hoksullo became anxious whenever he heard a sound.

‘In this environment, it will be hard to resist for a few days to a week. It is difficult even with Hoksullo eating the emergency food. It is meaningless if the other crew members join. It will only be good for the first three days. I need to find a way to escape that planet in the first few days or we will die of starvation.’

Three days wasn’t a short period of time. But it wasn’t a lot of time to find a way to escape the planet. And if he didn’t find the crew members then they

would starve.

Ark wouldn't starve due to the centipedes but he couldn't just wander around in the middle of nowhere. If he didn't find a way to escape from the planet then he would eventually starve to death.

A sigh flowed again at the thought. Ikyullos was Ark's planet. Yet the lord was going to starve on his planet!

'Dammit, this is so embarrassing that I can't even complain about it. And it will be useless if Marquis Martin died. I need to find Marquis Martin and his crew and then an escape method.'

So Ark deliberately chose a mountain.

There would be broader visibility and the range of the radar would increase. Instead, his stamina consumption would worsen. And it consisted of huge rocks that one misstep could cause serious injuries.

'.....Is it useless?'

Ark had that idea as the terrain became increasingly steeper. After messing around with the detector, Hoksullo exclaimed.

"Hyung-nim, a signal is being picked up!"

"What? Signal?"

"Yes, it is clearly a signal for an emergency pod!"

Hoksullo finally detected an emergency signal. Ark jumped back and asked.

"Where?"

"It is 2 kilometres away. In the direction of that ridge!"

"Okay. There is no time. Let's go!"

Ark and Hoksullo's pace was quick due to being filled with hope. And after

several large rocks, they finally went down a gentle slope. The signal became stronger as they neared their destination.

“U-unbelievable!”

Hoksullo burst out with confusion.

The two clearly arrived at a Noblesse emergency pod. And there were the crew members. But the two crew members aboard the emergency pod were turned into gory corpses.

“T-the firemen of the Noblesse. Why are they.....?”

“They’ve been assaulted.”

Ark looked around and said.

The dead bodies were torn to pieces so they hadn’t died of starvation. In other words, something had slain them. So far it wasn’t that strange.

Ark had already caught dozens of centipedes. It was an habitable environment so it was natural for monsters to be present. The problem was that the wounds on the bodies didn’t appear to be from monsters.

‘It is too clean to be from a monster’s claws or fangs. This is definitely a sword cut. And there are also gunshot wounds. Obviously the attackers used weapons.’

However, Ikyullos was in a vanished state. It was an empty planet which is why Ark had been given ownership. Of course, Ark and the crew of the Noblesse would be present. But some crew members had been found with sword and gun wounds.

‘Are there other people here in addition to us? Then it is highly likely they entered before the planet became invisible....’

While Ark was busy thinking. Suddenly a red dot on Hoksullo’s neck caught his

eyes.

‘....Is that?’

“Danger!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

Ark slammed into Hoksullo’s body as a gunshot was heard. The projectile slammed into a rock 10 feet away! If Ark’s response had been a little late then Hoksullo would be riddled with holes. Hoksullo and Ark were surprised by the sudden situation.

“H-Hyung-nim!”

“Withdraw to the rear!”

Ark said as he pulled out his Equalizer. And he looked in the direction of the bullets before flinching.

“T-those guys are?”

Space 4: Sir Martin!

SPACE 4. Sir Martin!

Wiiing! Wiing! Wiing!

The emergency pod had smashed into a stone mountain.

There was a motor sound as some creatures appeared. They looked like a pile of machines joined together that moved awkwardly. The pieces of metal that seemed to be stuck to a magnet were moving.

The name of these creatures....

“Nakuma?”

Why the hell was the Nakuma in a place like this? There was no room to think about it. Ark was puzzled by the enemy but red rays had focused on his body.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

And bullets flew towards him!

“Sword Defense!”

Ark moved his Equalizer vertically.

Then the bullets flying straight towards Ark split to the left and right. The use of the lightsaber’s attribute to change the projectile of a bullet was Sword Defense!

However, there were limitations when there was a hail of bullets. Sword Defense needed the right timing for it to be effective. It was impossible to adjust the timing when there was a succession of bullets.

Many projectiles exited Ark's body and caused him to bleed. In addition, the bullets shooting down on him made it hard to move. This was the bad thing about being fired upon in an open place!

"Ugh! Come out, Shire! Rune Carving, Hwairam!"

Ark brandished the Equalizer in one hand while his other hand inscribed a letter in the air. In the next moment, the rune formed the shape of a giant foot and touched the ground. This was the Hwairam rune he mastered on Muratio Star!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

There was a roaring sound as the hole mountain shook. That effect alone was enough.

The ground shook and the bullets flew in the wrong direction. The vibration of the earth caused the round of ammunition to miss Ark. In the meantime, Ark moved behind the rock where Hoksullo was hiding.

"Hyung-nim, are you alright? Because of me...."

"Pant, that was unexpected. There isn't anybody's fault."

"Yes, I never imagined that there would be Nakuma in a place like this. The Galactic Federation knows about the identity of the Nakuma but so far they've mainly appeared on the battlefields...."

"They must've killed the firemen."

Ark pointed to the two corpses. Now it was obvious who killed the two firemen in the emergency pods.

The reason why the Nakuma was here wasn't a significant problem. The important thing was to survive once the battle started!

'First I need to understand their exact number!'

“Rune Carving! Kuem Radon!”

This was the 2nd rune Ark learnt on Muratio Star. A light shot up from the rune like fireworks and formed a giant eye in the sky.

A small window that showed the situation in the surrounding situation was generated. The Nakuma were 30 metres away from the rocks where Ark and Hoksullo were hiding!

Ark’s face became tense as he counted them.

‘13 of them.....’

It was a taxing number. Furthermore, their levels didn’t seem to be low.

But this wasn’t a situation where he could complain.

Whether it was 10 or 100 enemies on the battlefield, he needed to kill them all to survive. If he didn’t resistance then Hoksullo would be like the dead firemen. The distance also meant that the pistol at his waist was like a decoration. In the end, Ark needed to deal with 13 Nakuma alone.

‘There is no time to be playing around. I need to use all my power from the beginning!’

“Armour armament!”

A flash of light appeared from Ark’s body. At the same time, an crustacean like armour appeared through a crack in space and enveloped Ark. Hoksullo rolled his eyes and screamed at the sight.

“R-Rama battle suit? Why does Hyung-nim have the Rama....”

However, he had no time to respond.

“Charenjok’s Token! The Octopus’s Blessing!”

Ark placed the Charenjok’s Token on his head and shouted. He started to look

like a Charenjok no as the octopus with 3 legs started working.

-Special item effect <Charenjok's Token: Octopus's Blessing> has been triggered!

High density nutrients like DHA and EPA have been injected into your body.

Thanks to the infusion of nutrients, the body's physical capabilities have been activated for a period of time.

<All stats +10% for 30 minutes. Cool down time: 2 hours>

That message popped up!

The Hyper Drone Lv. 2 increased all stats by 35%!

Then the 3rd evolution of the Charenjok's Token increased the effect by 10%!
After mobilizing his battle suit and the Charenjok's Token, his stats had increased by 45%.

The preparations were complete!

"Okay, let's go!"

And he moved!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Ping! Ping!

Laser scopes gathered on Ark's body after he revealed himself and bullets

flew. But he didn't use Sword Defense. In most battles, it would be difficult to switch to offense from defense. Sword Defense required him to stand still in order to scatter the bullets all over the place!

'I need to break through!'

"Phantom Boots! Soul Sprint!"

The Phantom Boots that allowed him to avoid 50% of long distance attacks when moving! His body changed into a transparent state as he charged through the bullets.

Of course, he wasn't invincible in this state. Soul Sprint only increased evasion by 50%. It would be difficult to breach through the shower of bullets.

"Armed Mind Shield!"

Ark invoked the armed Mind Shield that gave 2 Aegis shields. And he also set the Baius Shield in front of him. He was surrounded by 3 shields on the left, right and front. And he used Soul Sprint to dash through the air!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Ping! Ping!

He crossed through hundreds of metres of bullets. The bullets bounced off the Aegis and Baius shields. Occasionally some projectiles would penetrate the shield. Ark literally penetrated through hundreds of bullets and rushed towards the stone mountain.

And in the next moment, his sword dropped downwards.

Pepeng! Chwajijijijik!

The white light of the Equalizer exploded! Sparks flowed along the surface of the Nakuma. The Nakuma absorbed the damage with its shield. However, it was common sense that the shield was vulnerable to melee attacks! In addition, Ark's stats were increased by 45%!

A series of continuous attacks broke the shield.

“Sonic Sword!”

-The shield has been destroyed! Switch attack! Weapon change!

The Nakuma stumbled and retreated after the shield disappeared.

At the same time, 4 mechanical arms emerged from it. Firearms were a disadvantage in close combat so the program switched weapons. And the moment the machine rushed forward with its sharp arms....

“Armed Binding Sword!”

Ark turned and exclaimed. At the same time, the chest of his battle suit opened and chains of lights shot out. The lights shot out from Ark and bound the Nakuma.

“Don’t get me wrong. I can easily avoid your attacks. But now I’m not in a position where you are my only opponent.”

The Nakuma were gathered on the stone mountain. It was a huge tangle of rocks like a jungle gym. Of course, the positions of the Nakuma was different. Some were above the rocks, some were under the rocks 10 metres away where others were scattered and aiming towards Ark.

‘It is an easy road. I know their location so the bullet trajectory is easy to read. But it is difficult to predict the firing angle and obstacles with Kuem Radon. Soul Sprint is a skill that applied when moving. If I stay in one position too long then it will be disadvantageous.’

So the method he chose was to approach them!

‘But this terrain isn’t unfavourable. There are many obstacles on this stony mountain. At least it allows me to avoid intensive gunfire when changing location!’

In other words, they were more vulnerable! His method of dealing with them was not staying in one place too long. Ark had already decided to use this tactic after using Kuem Radon.

And one of the most useful techniques in this terrain was 'Armed Binding Sword.' This technique meant he could move at will through the rocky terrain.

Kikikiki! Kikikiki! Kikikiki!

'...Three of them?'

The sight of three Nakuma gathered on a flat rock caught his eye. The machines gave signs of confusion as Ark jumped up. They aimed their muzzle but Ark was faster.

"Khafra Fencing 4th style, Piercing!"

Ark stabbed with his Equalizer. And a ray of light penetrated the body of the Nakuma.

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

It was a dash at the speed of light! Sparks flew from the Nakuma's shield as Ark passed through them.

'This is more than I thought....'

Khafra Fencing 4th style, Piercing. It was a good offensive skill but he hadn't expected this much strength.

The technology itself was a rush type. However, it was completely different from what he imagined. It was such an explosive acceleration that Ark lost his eyesight for a moment! The strength of the acceleration reduced the durability of the Nakuma's shield by 50%.

'But this skill can't be blindly used in a place like this.'

It was a relatively, spacious rock but it only extended for 10 metres. He could only accelerate a short distance on the rock. But the new skill still had a great use.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

There was a hail of bullets without a break. Ark blocked with the Baius Shield. The white light of the Equalizer painted a complex trajectory as Ark attacked the Nakuma.

It wasn't a straight horizontal or vertical line. It was an endlessly smooth curve! A series of continuous attacks!

Snap! Snap! Snap! Snap....

Sparks kept on flying from the Nakuma after Ark's attacks. And when the Nakuma's shield was almost peeled off.

"Hyung-nim!"

Hoksullo yelled from a distance.

Ark turned and saw a Nakuma in the rear. Some Nakuma had targeted Hoksullo while Ark was distracted by the enemies.

In response, Hoksullo pulled out a pistol from his bag. Unlike Rapid's talking pistol, Hoksullo was just holding a simple gun. He fired at the bunch of Nakuma!

'Damn, I didn't think they would head to Hoksullo. If only I knew this would happen.'

Hoksullo was an important NPC to Ark. He needed Hoksullo to find the emergency pods. But now he needed to save Hoksullo so it was a huge burden.

'I guess I need to use this.'

"Come, Bao!"

Ark maintained a distance from the Nakuma and waved his arms. Then the shield fell to the floor as a liquid before changing into a golem.

-Dammit! What are you doing? Why are my arms covered in dirt? Why did you summon me in such a way? I've told you many times that I am a proud....

"Shut up!"

Ark kicked Bao and shouted.

-Ugh! What? Kicking me? You bastard! Why are you kicking me?

"You fool, can't you tell by the atmosphere? This is an emergency!"

-Emergency, you....

Bakak!

Bao was blown away in a curve and flew over the Nakuma.

-Ouch! W-what? This bastard?

"Blast!"

Bao had rolled forward like a snowball and tumbled in front of the Nakuma. At Ark's cry, he reflexively crouched down and fired awls at the Nakuma. The Nakuma reeled backwards as the projectiles shot from Bao. And....

-A new enemy has emerged! The target will change depending on the risk!
Shoot! Shoot!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

-Ugh! What? What? What?

"Your mission is to deal with them!"

Ark shouted towards Bao.

Bao was still level 30. On the other hand, the Nakuma were level 100. They

weren't proper opponents. However, it was possible to buy some time with Hoksullo helping.

"Hoksullo, cover that guy called Bao!"

"Understood!"

Pepeng! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

An explosion occurred at the same time Hoksullo answered. Ark was pushed back by a pressure and flew into a rock. He lifted his eyes and noticed a Nakuma holding a launcher.

"Dammit, there really is a variety of problems."

Then the launcher fired another shell.

"Armed Binding Sword!"

Ark aimed the light at the rock in front of him. At the same time, the light was pulled and caused the rock to fly. It flew over Ark as the Nakuma's muzzle aimed towards it. And it was hit with bullets from a Gatling gun!

'I've been fighting with 5 Nakuma.'

"Chain Attack!"

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

Ark clenched his fist and shouted.

The Nakuma Ark was fighting were engulfed in an explosion.

This was another attack learnt on the ghost planet. Khafra Fencing 5th style, Chain Attack! The enemies attacked were connected with a chain that would blow up.

This technique could connect up to 5 enemies. It would give more damage when more enemies were connected.

But there was a limitation. The chained enemies couldn't be too far away. In fact, the Nakuma that attacked Hoksullo had originally been chained together. But now they were too far so the skill had been released. He only took out 3 with the explosion.

Thanks to that, the damage of the explosion had been halved.

In the meantime, Ark moved being a sword and gasped for breath.

'The battle and Octopus's Blessing has increased by stats by 45% but I am facing 13 Nakuma that are level 100.' This wasn't a situation where he could afford to relax. Despite there being many obstacles, he couldn't fight without receiving damage. His clothes had become wet from blood. 'I can't be hasty. I need to move tirelessly around them!'

This was required when dealing with a large number of enemies! He couldn't stop moving his head or body for a moment. He would be riddled with holes the moment he stopped.

'I can't think about escaping from Ikyullos with Marquis Martin and the crew or protecting Hoksullo. It will be no use if I'm dead. So now I must focus on the fight.'

Ark deleted all other thoughts. And once his head was empty.

He raised his entire body.

'.....Go!'

Syu syu syu syu! Pepeng! Tu tu tu tu!

In the meantime, the Nakuma were firing the launcher and machine guns everywhere. Rocks became recessed and engulfed in flames.

But Ark was already somewhere else. Ark used Kuem Radon to search the movement of the Nakuma and then used Armed Binding Sword!

“Khafra Fencing 3rd style! Galaxy Sword!”

A shower of swords swirled around the Nakuma. And the Nakuma turned their muzzles towards other rocks. Ark jumped between rocks like Tarzan and avoided the shells and bullets. And he would quickly stop to attack the Nakuma before moving again.

“That is Ark who receive the title of Beltana’s Hero in the Bellin Constellation....!”

The Nakuma’s bullets poured in to the rocks.

Hoksullo stared blankly at Ark’s battle. However, Ark hadn’t even used all the tricks in his bag.

-Hyper Drone’s remaining mana: 40%

Ark checked the mana remaining in his battle suit. The maintenance time had increased by 30% thanks to the synchronization on Impeltus. However, the battle had already started for 30 minutes and there was 40% mana left.

Ark could still hold on for 10 minutes but....

‘It isn’t very effective compared to how long I’ve been fighting.’

The battle was one-sided in Ark’s advantage. But he still hadn’t killed any Nakuma. The problem was that he couldn’t stick to one enemy for too long.

But the shields were destroyed and the Nakuma were forced into close combat. Thanks to that, the Nakuma’s health had steadily reduced but hadn’t reached 0 yet. There was still a short delay as hundreds of bullets rained down so it was like walking a tightrope to avoid it.

‘Hoksullo is concerned and I can’t keep this up forever. Something was required to change the situation. And there is still a chance!’

His worries didn't last long.

“Armed Binding Sword!”

Ark made a decision as light exploded from him. He avoided the bullets and climbed to the summit of the rock, allowing 12 Nakuma to enter his sight.

Ark aimed his gun at the Nakuma. No, the moment he was about to do it!

“Solid Armour! Summon Fire Avarice!”

The space behind Ark distorted and a new armour appeared. It mounted on the battle suit to increase the bulk by 1.5 times. This was the Solid Armour he obtained on the ghost planet!

The weight increased so his movement slowed down but his defensive power increased by 30%. But the defense wasn't Fire Avarice's real value.

“Start Fire Avarice!”

Woong woong woong woong! Woong woong woong woong!

A red light appeared at Ark's shoulders and made it bloat like a balloon. Red dots flashed on the bodies of the Nakuma Ark was looking at.

-Lock on!

-Lock on!

-Lock on!

-Lock on...

After 12 red dots appeared!

“Carpet bombing!”

Pusung! Pusung! Pusung! Pusung!

In the next moment, his bloated shoulders opened and 12 small missiles shot up. This was the carpet bombing skill of Fire Avarice!

The Nakuma instinctively sensed the crisis as missiles emerged from Ark’s body and tried to hurriedly withdraw. However, the missiles of Fire Avarice were guided missiles!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Flames shot up from 12 different places on the stony mountain. The Nakuma were mechanical creatures but were still weak to explosive weapons. Furthermore, most of them had their health decreased to 50% during the 30 minute battle.

The carpet bombing turned 8 Nakuma into piles of trash. Then a bizarre scene occurred.

‘What is that?’

Among the remnants of the broken Nakuma. A unknown black shape rose up.

‘It’ floated above the rubble for a moment before being sucked into the black curtain in the sky.

He had experience fighting the Nakuma on Nephalim and Amara but this was the first time he saw this scene.

‘Is that really the Nakuma? Or.....’

Ark had kept up the Hajaska rune after landing here. If he hadn’t used it then he wouldn’t have been able to see Ikyullos. Therefore, he used the power of Hajaska once he landed on Ikyullos.

Maybe black spirits had also emerged from the Nakuma on Nephalim and Amara. He just couldn't see it until now.

'Speaking of which, I don't know that much about the Nakuma despite hunting with the Silver Hand. Maybe this black shape is related to how the Nakuma forms.'

But now wasn't the time to dig out the secrets of the Nakuma. He needed to defeat all the Nakuma!

'There are 4 Nakuma remaining!'

"Fire Avarice release! Armed Binding Sword!"

Ark got rid of the Solid Armour and flew down. His mana was running out so he needed to peel off the battle suit. Now they were in a critical condition so he could handle the 4 remaining Nakuma.

Ark, Hoksullo and Bao were able to take care of the remaining Nakuma in 5 minutes.

-You! Master, look at me!

"Summon release."

And Bao returned to his shield form.

-Your level has risen!

-Your summon (Bao) has levelled up....

His level rose after the whole experience.

Bao who was summoned also had his level rise. Bao had gone up 4 levels.

"Amazing, Hyung-nim! To be honest, I thought it was hopeless. Managing to

defeat so many Nakuma alone; you truly are worth being called a hero.”

“Were you surprised?”

“Huh? Ah no, my words were a mistake.”

Hoksullo quickly shook his head.

“In fact, I thought that Marquis-nim was favouring Hyung-nim too much among all the pioneers.”

Ark had also notice that atmosphere previously.

After obtaining the title of Beltana’s Hero, many officials were interested in Ark. However, the crew members riding on Marquis Martin’s Noblesse didn’t show any interest. No, the atmosphere had actually been rather cold.

Hoksullo quickly started talking after Ark didn’t respond.

“But now I realized that it isn’t just Marquis-nim’s personal preference. No, I am ready to concede that you aren’t normal. Anyway, you are amazing. Swish! I’ve seen anyone fight like that. And....”

Hoksullo glanced at Ark before adding.

“A person from the Galactic Federation is using a Rama battle suit.”

It was obvious he wanted an explanation. But Ark ignored him. He didn’t want to explain the circumstances of the Rama battle suit because the emergence of the Nakuma had complicated the situation.

“If there is an opportunity then I will explain it at a later date. Right now we need to search for the other emergency pods. The situation has changed with the Nakuma. The Nakuma has the ability to detect machines. The safety of the other crew members can’t be guaranteed. We should find the other members before they are attacked by the Nakuma.”

“Indeed.”

Hoksullo swallowed his saliva as he stared at the corpses in the emergency pods.

“Some of the crew who escaped from the Noblesse aren’t combatants.”

The situation was more desperate than before. No matter how urgent, he still picked up the loot that dropped from the Nakuma.

-<Parts: Drive Motor> has been obtained.

-<Parts: High Power Battery> has been obtained....

Ark snatched the items scattered around the stony mountain.

Meanwhile, Hoksullo was taking the supplies from the emergency pod. He also tried to find information on other pods.

Tuk, busususu....

Stone flakes fell nearby. And there was a sound from behind him.

‘Was another Nakuma nearby?’

“Hoksullo, stay back!”

Ark stood in front of Hoksullo with his Equalizer. And the sound of someone running past the rocks could be heard.

“Hoksullo? Hoksullo?”

“Captain Fay-nim!”

Hoksullo shouted from behind him.

A man Ark had seen before had emerged from the rocks. He was the middle aged man on the Noblesse with Marquis Martin. His name was Fay. He seemed

to be a special captain serving under Marquis Martin.

Unlike Hoksullo, he was a combatant. He was wearing combat armour with a heavy weapon on his shoulder, a pistol at his waist holster and a dagger attached to his ankle.

“How lucky. You are the first ones I met.”

Fay said towards Hoksullo.

He completely ignored Ark.

“Do you have the communications equipment?”

“Yes, of course. But the effects of the metal in the sandstorm means that it doesn’t work properly. I used some emergency parts to change the output frequency of the short wave detection system but it is still only 2~3 kilometres.”

“In this situation, that is better than nothing.”

Fay nodded.

Then a scene suddenly flashed through Ark’s head. Just before the Noblesse sunk, Fay was the person with Marquis Martin. Considering the emergency pods could contain 2 people, he was likely the person to accompany Marquis Martin!

“Did you get into the emergency pod with Marquis Martin?”

“Of course. Who else would be next to Marquis-nim?”

Fay replied in a curt voice.

Ark didn’t care about that voice due to his worry over Marquis Martin. Marquis Martin was like a VVVIP to Ark.

Ark was sighing in relief when Fay continued.

“Marquis-nim is at the emergency pod not far from here. We were hoping the

crew member would come find us. I was just scouting the area.”

“W-wait? Marquis-nim is alone? And waiting at the emergency pod?”

“So? What’s wrong?”

“Oh my god!”

“What? What’s with this reaction?”

Fay looked around with an absurd expression. Hoksullo shouted with an upset expression.

“Captain Fay-nim, Marquis Martin might be in danger!”

“Danger? What does that mean....?”

“Look here! This isn’t the emergency pod we arrived with. The firemen Hekdo and Nielson were aboard! But they were already killed by the Nakuma by the time we arrived here!”

“Nakuma? Nakuma are here?”

“Yes, we were ambushed by the Nakuma. Fortunately they were handled by Hyung-nim but the Nakuma here are much stronger than the ones on Istana. And the Nakuma are natural metal hunters. If there are other groups of Nakuma besides the ones that attacked us....”

The others would be looking to feed. Marquis Martin was left alone at the emergency pod.

“Dammit!”

Fay cursed and turned around. Ark was already moving in the direction Fay had come from.

“Guide me! What direction is the emergency pod?”

“Follow me!”

Fay desperately ran past Ark.

They slid down the slope before arriving at a long valley. The width of the valley was approximately 20 metres.

Ark ran along the valley as Fay spoke.

“Marquis-nim is on the other side of the valley. Cross a gap that is just narrow enough to pass and climb up. We should be able to shortly check on Marquis-nim’s safety.”

Fay’s words were true.

The emergency pod could be seen 5 minutes after passing through a narrow gap. And Marquis Martin was leisurely sitting next to a smoking campfire.

“...He seems to be safe.”

Fay sighed and slowed his pace.

“If we continue a few hundred metres further, we can exit through the other side of the valley.”

“Wait a moment. This....”

Ark who was following Fay flinched and stopped.

Several red lights caught his eye when checking the valley beyond Marquis Martin. The laser scope of a Nakuma was unmistakably aimed at Marquis Martin.

“Marquis-nim, danger!”

A yell exploded from Ark’s mouth.

7 Nakuma had revealed themselves behind Marquis Martin.

The western boundary of the Galactic Federation, aka the West Belt.

Suddenly hundreds of lights appeared in the space. Then hundreds of spaceships and speedboats appeared one after another.

“Fleet Commander, the warp has been completed!”

“Okay. The operation will begin. Divide the speedboats into quadrants. Search for a ship’s debris, even a small screw. Don’t miss even the smallest of clues. No, it shouldn’t be missed.”

–I understand!

–Start operation! West squadron follow me!

Dozens of squadron leaders saluted on the screen. The appearance of hundreds of speedboats was to search for Marquis Martin.

“If we can’t find Marquis Martin during this mission...or if he has already died...and if it is an ambush like the message contents....”

Weston muttered in a low voice.

“....It is war.”

“T-this.....!”

An uneasy voice flowed from Ark’s mouth.

A mess was unfolded in front of him. Footprints were stamped on the floor. Countless bullet holes. Black smoke was blowing up from the emergency pod.

However, Ark didn’t pay attention to the landscape. Ark’s eyes were still recalling the vivid scene he just witnessed.

Marquis Martin had been discovered in the small valley! And then Nakuma appeared behind him! If they arrived a little earlier then they could save Marquis Martin from danger. However....there was no need to.

“What the, this is? Nakuma?”

Nakuma had appeared behind him. Marquis Martin turned around and frowned.

He seemed too easy-going. The Nakuma was classified as a machine lifeform. They were enough to spook any noble. Ark thought Marquis Martin’s attitude was absurd and wanted to shout. Don’t turn around like a rabbit!

Just as he thought about talking.

“7 Nakuma...that should be enough....”

Contrary to Ark’s thoughts, Fay sighed with relief. And he released the heavy machine gun at his shoulder and kneeled down.

“This distance should be enough to provide cover.”

“Cover? What cover? This situation can’t be solved with just support!”

“Shut up and let me observe.”

Fay said with a frown.

“It’s been a while. I don’t know if I have become rusty in the meantime. Wild Arm!”

Marquis Martin spread his arms widely and exclaimed.

At that moment, a small metal plate at Marquis Martin’s shoulders started to expand and emit light. And there was an unbelievable transformation as a huge, metal piece was mounted on Marquis Martin’s arms.

And a scene Ark couldn’t believe occurred afterwards.

“What are you looking at? Bring it on!

Marquis Martin laughed. In the next moment, the elbow part of the arm opened and bullets were fired.

Pepeng! Pepeng! Chwajijijijik!

The powerful bullets crashed into the bodies of the level 100 Nakuma! That wasn't all. Marquis Martin rushed forward and slammed the metal arms into the Nakuma that had stumbled.

Enormous destructive power!

This wasn't just the power of the mechanical Wild Arms. The Wild Arms blocked the Nakuma's bullets while the fist and elbows were brandished with the power of a cannon! Ark watched as Marquis Martin casually cornered 7 Nakuma.

Tung tung tung tung! Tung tung tung tung!

Fay's machine gun also provided cover. The 7 Nakuma were turned into piles of garbage in only 10 minutes.

Ark was truly shocked by the scene of Marquis Martin fighting! It wasn't just the battle. It felt like he was watching someone else altogether. Then Fay placed the machine gun on his shoulder again and turned to Ark.

"What is with that look? Did you think that Marquis-nim is weak? Don't misunderstand. Before Marquis-nim was a noble...."

Fay continued with a smile.

".....A warrior."

Space 5: Hero of the Past, Current Hero

SPACE 5. Hero of the Past, Current Hero

“Warrior? Marquis-nim?”

“Eh? Perhaps you didn’t know?”

Hoksullo gazed at him with amazed eyes.

No, what...Ark never asked...he never even thought about it.

But he did think that something was strange. In particular, the battle between the Noblesse and the tentacles. The Noblesse ended up being sunk but Marquis Martin had shown a remarkable leadership ability.

He quickly coped with the situation and took immediate command. A noble was someone who looked through documents. But Ark’s memory showed Marquis Martin’s combativeness. He fought an unidentified enemy with no hesitation. He even seemed to enjoy it.

At the time, Ark had thought ‘is he crazy?’.

“Originally all nobles in the Galactic Federation are required to do military service. But they mainly worked as intelligence officers in the rear headquarters. But Marquis Martin volunteered for the front lines. And not long after the 10 Year War started.”

This was the period where humans had advanced into the galaxy for the first time. They engaged in a fierce war with the Rama for 10 years. Marquis Martin was a small noble on the front lines of the 10 Year War.

“Of course, other nobles also participated in the war. But most of them were

commanders who gave orders from the rear. Marquis Martin always fought the enemy at the forefront. It is hard to imagine an ordinary person obtaining such great achievements over 10 years. Assault operation on Guran Asteroid, rescuing the residents of Iberios, recapturing the Taltan Fortress and wiping out the fleet who were using a multidimensional portal to attack Istana were all conducted by Marquis Martin.”

In other words, a war hero! This was the reason why Marquis Martin headed the military faction.

“Marquis Martin is currently the Galactic Federation’s consultant. It isn’t an official title. However, he can still move the armies of the Galactic Federation. Many nobles who served as incumbent generals in the 10 Year War received his help and the soldiers also admire Marquis Martin. The pride of the soldiers in Marquis Martin is amazing. If Marquis Martin requires help then the best elite would be gathered.”

Marquis Martin’s background was completely exposed!

“How do you know so much details?”

“I read his biography.”

There were many biographies about the creation of a war hero. Marquis Martin’s performance earned him a foothold in the military.

‘I didn’t think he was an ordinary NPC but....’

Ark didn’t think his career would be so grand. Fay who had been quietly listening then said.

“He is different from a hero created for promotional activities.”

‘.....It is like that.’

Now he could see why Fay disliked him. Ark had receive the title of Hero due

to his actions on Beltana. The Galactic Federation had promoted this in a huge manner.

Of course, Ark had actually accomplished the achievement. However, Ark was shown on Federation TV as a means to reverse the public's attitude towards the war.

In Fay's eyes, Ark wasn't a hero but a puppet of the military. Fay had so much pride in being under Marquis Martin's command that it was understandable why he would think that way.

Ark had also caused difficulty to Marquis Martin. Especially this incident.

Marquis Martin didn't need to directly investigate the incident of Ikyullos disappearing. Despite that, he had picked up Ark and they worked together to investigate it. And the result was a total failure. Of course Fey would blame Ark.

Then Hoksullo shook his head at Fay's attitude.

"Promotional hero? That's not right! Hyung-nim...."

"Master Sergeant Hoksullo!"

Fay shouted sharply. And he turned his head with an uncomfortable expression.

"This isn't an official mission but Marquis Martin is still in charge of the military operation. The most important value in the army is discipline and chain of command. Why is a military soldier using that honorific for a mere civilian?"

"B-but Hyung-nim...."

"Sergeant!"

"....I'm really sorry."

Hoksullo replied helplessly. It was true he was a promotional hero but....

Something hateful became lodged inside him. But Ark couldn't question it closely. He couldn't change Fay's mind and now wasn't the time to fight him.

So he shut his mouth and trudged through the valley to where Marquis Martin and the Nakuma wreckage was waiting.

"Hey Ark, you are still alive."

"Marquis-nim. You showed me a great scene."

Ark replied in a curt voice.

In fact, he was in a bad mood due to Fay's attitude. On the other hand, he also felt somewhat tricked by Marquis Martin.

Then Marquis Martin made an awkward expression.

"Well, I once...."

"I've heard about it. You were once a war hero."

"I don't know what you've been told but it isn't a great thing. Sometimes I just stood around yelling. Actually, I struggled to survive every time. The biography only wrote about things like my untiring commitment. You can't believe those biographies."

"So it is kind of like my position?"

"Ah, yes. You once became a prison."

"Yes, just once. It is all thanks to Marquis-nim."

Ark sneaked a peak at Marquis Martin who laughed.

"Kuk kuk kuk, don't act like that. Aren't you also a hero? Heroes should get along with each other."

"But why are you not laughing?"

“This situation isn’t enough. Why did we fall into a place like this? At least the worst hasn’t happened. Isn’t that right, Fay?”

“It is like Marquis-nim said.”

Anyway....

The Noblesse suddenly received a surprised attack. Marquis Martin’s personality seemed to change from then on. They encountered an unknown enemy and were stranded on a planet. Yet he couldn’t find any confusion on the face of Marquis Martin.

Instead of confusion, Marquis Martin actually seemed like he enjoyed the atmosphere? He seemed to be overflowing with vigour compared to when they were in the meeting room. Ark was baffled by Marquis Martin’s mood.

“But there is still a lot of work.”

“It seems so.”

Marquis Martin turned towards the other crew members and replied.

“The safety of the other crew members from the Nakuma can’t be guaranteed. In this situation, the top priority should be to search for the other crew members. Hoksullo, is the communications equipment safe?”

“Yes, but the range is only 2~3 kilometres.”

“I guess so.”

Marquis Martin nodded like he had guessed this.

“But that will be enough.”

“Huh?”

Ark looked doubtful after hearing Marquis Martin’s words.

The Noblesse crew members were scattered all over the planet, not in a

narrow area. Even if the range was limited by the scope of the sunspot, that was still an extent of several hundred kilometres He couldn't understand why being able to search with a range of 2~3 kilometres was enough.

Marquis Martin seemed to see the '?' in Ark's eyes and asked.

"Perhaps you still don't know?"

"What is it?"

"The reason why the Captain escapes from the ship last."

"Well that...."

"Don't tell me your answer is to save my pride and dignity?"

...That was indeed the answer he was thinking of.

Marquis Martin laughed as Ark blushed.

"Indeed, you don't have a lot of experience yet. And your idea is wrong. The Captain isn't the last one to escape in order to preserve their pride. The more important reason is that the crew who escaped first can check the situation. We can watch their situation from behind and devise measures."

".....!"

"Most of the crew who escaped first fell to the same place. If we orient the communication equipment to the approximate direction then we can grasp the general location. Then we can send the emergency signal to anybody nearby."

"I found one beyond that stone mountain."

Fay replied.

"Ark and Hoksullo wasn't riding that one. Who was on-board?"

"The firemen Nielson and Hekdo. But when I arrived...."

“Nakuma?”

“Yes, according to the words of Ark and Hoksullo who arrived first.”

“It is unpleasant but hopefully they are the only victims in this situation. Although Hekdo and Neilson have played a decisive role in saving their colleagues.”

Marquis Martin said while nodding.

“Once they fell into the sunspot, only 2 emergency pods were throw far away. One was the emergency pod Ark was aboard. And Hekdo and Nielson were riding the other one. In other words, most of the crew should be on the other side of that area.”

Marquis Martin pointed to a rock formation.

“They should be gathered not far from each other over there. It will be easy to find the emergency pods once we get 2~3 kilometres from the area.”

Ark look at Marquis Martin with admiration as he cleaned up the situation. Ark had escaped the Noblesse at the same time as Marquis Martin.

But he hadn't even thought about looking at the location where the other crew members fell. He couldn't afford to worry about the well-being of the other crew members. However, Marquis Martin had thought beyond the current situation.

He was the head of the military faction for a reason. That wasn't all.

“We've figured out the approximate direction so let's move. We need to hurry to ensure the well-being of the crew.”

Marquis Martin lifted a branch full of centipedes.

“M-Marquis-nim can even eat something like that?”

Hoksullo asked with a wince. Marquis Martin grinned at his astounded expression and replied.

“You have the same reaction. This is nothing compared to the past when I was on the battlefield. At that time, the Star Gates hadn’t been developed and the worst situation could leave you stranded for months. I ate anything that was available in order to not die. Most components of insects in the universe are poisonous but it doesn’t matter after not eating for a few days. Some soldiers even ate the flesh of dead bodies in order to survive. And humans aren’t a fragile species. Some soldiers were even able to chew on ore. These days, the soldiers seem a bit fragile.”

“I’m really sorry.”

Fay blushed at Marquis Martin’s words. He also reacted like Hoksullo when he ate a centipede.

“It isn’t necessary to eat this now because we have food. But the future can’t be guaranteed. If we burn them over a fire then most of the toxins will be alleviated. It is better to have more emergency food available. We shouldn’t eat it if possible.”

This was the reason why Marquis Martin had created a campfire.

Ark ate the centipedes in order to save some food. However, Marquis Martin had found a way to alleviate the toxins and was stockpiling food.

This was the difference between the current Ark and Marquis Martin. Marquis Martin who rose to the rank of hero as the commander of soldiers was different from Ark who became a personal hero.

In a sense, Marquis Martin was a true survivor!

‘I’ve surprisingly learned quite a bit about this NPC.’

Just as Ark was thinking this. Fay hit Ark with his shoulder as he passed by and murmured.

“Do you understand now? The difference between you and Marquis Martin. Hero? Don’t make me laugh.”

Ark had been annoyed when it was previously brought up. At least until now. The shocking battle scene just before they fell onto Ikyullos. He had to admit that Marquis Martin was outstanding as a commander and a warrior.

But he couldn’t complain. Now their top priority was finding a way to escape from Ikyullos. It was good that Marquis Martin was a commander he could trust. Ark might be annoyed by Fay’s attitude but there was no room for pride.

“What are you doing? Go quickly!”

Marquis Martin said lightly. Fay, Ark, Hoksullo and Marquis Martin silently walked through the swirling sandstorm towards the rock formation.

“Marquis-nim, a signal has been detected!”

Hoksullo shouted from behind in a lively voice.

“Three have been caught at the same time. They are 300 metres and 700 metres away from each other!”

“The closest one?”

“2.5 kilometres in the 4 o’clock direction!”

“We will check there first!”

Martin Marquis jumped ahead while shouting.

He was followed by Ark, Fay and Hoksullo. An emergency pod had fallen between stone pillars that rose up like a tree.

However, it wasn’t only the crew that was there. They were surrounded by 20

shadows!

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepeng!

The party that appeared on top of a hill could hear the sound of gunshots and explosions. Fay sent Marquis Martin an urgent look.

“Marquis-nim, the Nakuma!”

“Fortunately we’re not too late.”

Marquis Martin grinned and nodded.

“This reminds me of the military escape option on the planet Taoros. At that time, 20 troops were surrounded by 7,000 Rama and we needed to escape. This is nothing compared to that time. Isn’t that right?”

“Of course, Marquis-nim.”

“I’ll take the lead. Iron Arms!”

Marquis Martin once again summoned the mechanical arm. And he rushed forward like a bison towards the Nakuma.

“Hrmm.....”

The lush jungle.

A man was sitting under a cliff like it was his house. A skinny but muscular body that was as hard as a rock. The man who seemed to be in his 30s was called Isyuram!

He had flourished in the paid hunting ground on R-14. And he proudly entered Istana a week ago! Isyuram had unbelievably changed in the meantime.

Once again, Isyuram had only started the game for 10 days so he was a beginner.

However, Isyuram already had 150 subordinates. The Lucifer Hunting team. The 150 people were among the 300 members of the Department of Defense.

They started a few months ago and already reached level 100 in the city of Kurim.....

“I will manage you guys from now on!”

After reaching level 20 on R-14, Isyuram entered Kurim and made that declaration! There was no opposition. The hierarchy of their relationship had already been established in reality.

Thanks to that, Isyuram could completely dominate the 150 people. It was a piece of cake to level up. He just needed to wander the hunting grounds with his level 100 subordinates and lapped up the experience.

A free taxi!

Furthermore, he had good equipment thanks to an ample budget. Isyuram reached level 60 in one week and armed himself with the best equipment.

‘This feels good.’

Isyuram licked his lips as he studied his shiny armour.

It was different from when he started New World. He needed to hide that he was tracking gangsters so he had been alone. Furthermore, he needed to raise the character of the previous investigator who had selected a merchant.

Compared to then, he was now like an emperor.

‘But.....’

Isyuram had expected some wonderful action after hearing about the game from Ark. Something like fighting against monsters when armed with guns and swords!

But the reality was that it was boring.

The team was currently hunting level 200 monsters in a party. The level 60 Isyuram didn't dare interrupt their battle. Of course, he was the leader so he also gained tons of experience. Therefore he didn't fight and only experienced a boring routine.

'Now I know what Ark was talking about. I thought it would be fun with the master code but it is just boring!'

But Isyuram wasn't the only one irritated by the issue. It didn't just involve him. This was a huge mission for the country of Korea.

Isyuram was frustrated because of that. It was boring but he couldn't complain. His purpose was to monitor the team. He would directly confirm the results of the team members.

'Can these circumstances continue?'

He thought about it in vain. Thus Isyuram was in a depressed mood.

Then a team member, Harper came back to report to Isyuram.

"Captain-nim, the terrain exploration is over. The ruins of the Alkan Clan that we were seeking is over this cliff. There's only a little bit more to grow. Our team has investigated the Alkan Clan and determined that they can use mysterious techniques to install amazing power into ordinary equipment. Hopefully we'll be able to obtain significantly advanced equipment during the exploration."

"Ah, is that so?"

Harper said excitedly but Isyuram didn't seem inspired.

Isyuram didn't care about finding ruins. Besides, he couldn't wear most of the equipment found in the ruins. Isyuram had nothing to do with this issue.

However, it was his work. Isyuram looked up at the cliff.

“Then we better hurry. It will be harder to climb the cliff in the dark.”

“Huh? What does that mean.....?”

“Why? Are my words strange? Don’t we have to climb the cliff to reach the Alkan Clan’s ruins? We should rush before it becomes evening.”

“...Pfff!”

Harper burst out laughing. His eyes became annoyed and Harper quickly shook his head.

“Ah, I’m really sorry. I forgot that Captain-nim is still a beginner in Galaxian. Didn’t you previously play the game New World? New World is a game with a medieval fantasy background. But this is Galaxian. The 24th century with spaceships flying. Does it make sense to climb a cliff without any gear in this day and age?”

“Then you have equipment to go up?”

“Hey, show him.”

Harper turned his head and said.

Then one of the team members took out something. It was a metal frame with a ‘大’ shape. The team member fixed the frame to his body with a belt and pulled the handle to cause fire to be emitted from the bottom? Harper noticed Isyuram’s confusion at the scene and said.

“This is the exploration equipment called Skywalker. Climbing cliffs hundreds of metres high in the jungle won’t be a problem.”

“...You bought it?”

“Huh? Ah, yes. 500 gold.”

“.....Expensive.”

“The machine is a little on the expensive side. My team has 15 people so it cost 7,500 gold. But don’t you think the investment is worth it? We are elites trying to solve this country’s problem.”

“...Hrmm!”

Isyuram nodded. And he pulled out a rifle from his backpack and aimed it.

Tutung! Pajik!

Fire blazed from the crew member using the Skywalker. Even if he was level 60, shooting wasn’t a problem for Isyuram. Once he pressed the trigger, the bullet accurately penetrated the Skywalker that was 30 metres away.

At the same time, sparks rose and the member playing with the Skywalker vertically dropped! He was stuck upside down in the ground and required emergency treatment.

“W-what are you doing?”

“Shut up, you bastard!”

Isyuram yelled at Harper.

“How much was that machine that was destroyed with one shot by a level 60 person? 500 gold? 7,500 gold for 15 people? Are you just playing around? What is 7,500 gold worth to you? If 7,500 gold was turned into cash then it would be 7 million won. You invested that much money into a toy? Do you think I’m joking around now?”

“But we....”

“Civil servants eat the taxes of mothers and fathers. Yet you guys used tax money on such rubbish. Now I know. Why a budget of 15 billion won went into this game. My head couldn’t understand it. It was because you casually buy toys

worth 500 gold then the budget is 15 billion won.”

“Captain-nim, these words are too much!”

“Too much?”

“Like I said, this equipment is necessary for the mission. Our mission is to equip ourselves so that we can handle Lucifer. We have to grow as much as possible during this time. We need to complete quests and level up faster than others. The Skywalker is an investment for this reason. Think about it realistically. We would waste a lot of time climbing up the cliff.”

“Aha!”

Isyuram laughed and nodded.

“Now I know. The work I should do here.”

“Work?”

“I need to repair your rotten spirits.”

Isyuram stared at Harper and the team with gleaming eyes.

“Level? Equipment? Yes, they are important in a game. But will you die if you wear a bullet-proof jacket? Won’t the bullet just bounce off? How funny. The most important thing with soldiers is their mentality. An indomitable spirit is required to overcome obstacles. Hey soldier, are my words wrong?”

“But this world is a game!”

“T.h.e.r.e.f.o.r.e! Mentality is even more important!”

Isyuram’s eyes seemed to bore into Harper’s spirit.

“It seems to me that you lot are sturdy men. Perhaps not many people can beat you in a 1-on-1 fight. But that is in reality. Here you are no different from the general population. Level? There will always be users you can’t keep up

with. Equipment? It is the same for that as well. Therefore the spirit of a soldier needs to be better than the general public. It is a matter of mentality. Won't it also be easier in regards to the public's taxes? Shouldn't you raise your mindset?"

"Then what are we supposed to do?"

"What else? Are your hands and feet just decorations?"

"You want us to use our bodies to climb to the top of these cliffs?"

"Of course."

"T-that is ridiculous....!"

Harper's face darkened at Isyuram's reply.

"Are you insane? This is a game but the physical laws of reality also applies here! In addition, hasn't Captain-nim adjusted the pain values to 100%? It is impossible to climb the cliff in such a state. And if we fall and die then it will feel like our bodies actually shattered!"

Isyuram's answer to Harper's words.....

"That is the optimum conditions."

He indicated with his thumb. And he made a solemn expression before dropping a bombshell announcement.

"Extreme conditions are ideal to train your spirit. It will definitely be effective. That's why I'm banning all team members from using the Skywalkers. Take off your climbing gear. Is that clear?"

"Oh my god! Then there is no benefits?"

"No benefits? Why do you assume that?"

Isyuram snorted.

“I heard this from a user that I know.”

A user who had 10 NPC subordinates.

However, the body and spirit of his subordinates were too fragile. Usually a user would discard the subordinate due to disappointment. However, he didn't give up.

He believed in them and spared no effort to train his subordinates. And they were willing to accept the painful ordeal!

“A miracle happened.”

Their stamina increased. Concentration rose after they were chased by a bee swarm. Strength increased when they climbed a cliff.

“I wept after listening to him. A miracle was created due to the subordinate's faith. And a tough body and spirit was born.”

He was talking about Ark and his team members. Ark had told this story when recommending Galaxian to Isyuram. This tremendous adaptation ability....

“But the outcome is just their mental attitudes. Their stats only climbed by 1 point at most. This is insignificant for you guys who have already crossed level 100. One piece of equipment can increase your stats by 10~20 points. But they overcame this with their own effort. On the other hand, what about you? You entered this world a few months earlier than me. But you didn't even discover this method to raise your stats.”

Isyuram gazed at Harper and his team with a scornful expression.

“It is because you didn't work hard! You never tried! Isn't this a result of your rotten spirit? How can a team with such rotten spirits face Lucifer? Don't hope a miracle. We have to do the best we can. You are only eligible to use the public's tax money when you are blood and sweat stained!”

It was a statement that didn't add up. But Isyuram's words shook the heart of the team members. The taxpayers' money!

The rice they ate in reality and in the game was due to the taxpayers' money. But their thought of their own family after hearing Isyuram's words. They couldn't accept such a thing!

"We were too short-sighted!"

"My eyes are finally opened!"

"We will follow Captain-nim's will!"

The team members clenched their fists and shouted. And they started climbing up the hundreds of metres high cliff with their bare skin.

Of course, this wasn't an easy task. These soldiers had received special training but they had never climbed cliffs this high with bare skin. Moreover, their pain setting was 100% real!

"Ugh! My shoulders are falling. I can't even move a finger."

They felt vivid muscle pain. However, the team members didn't give up. The atmosphere was extremely heated because they didn't like the thought that they were wasting the taxpayers' money.

"Pant! Aaaaaaack!"

The crew didn't fall down.

"Pant pant, don't look back! Pant pant, we are fighting for our country!"

"Ugh! We are soldiers of South Korea!"

"Pant pant pant! Pant pant! We can't lose our courage!"

"Pant pant pant! My comrades should climb over my dead body, pant pant! In the future, pant! In the future, pant pant pant!"

The members started singing an army song. They encouraged themselves with pale faces and called out to their comrades until their throats were sore. And they moved one trembling arm after another.

After 10 hours, the sky lightened as dawn arrived.

“T-this is normal!”

“I really did it! I climbed up!”

“We did it! Follow Captain-nim’s words!”

2 members of the 13 crew members finally arrived on top of the cliff. And tears dripped down as they stared at the rising sun with overwhelming emotions. It was the best feeling in the middle of a game!

No one could feel ashamed of themselves. Their self-esteem rose after successfully climbing the cliff. Yet they were unaware of something.

The story about Ark and the Royal Guards that Isyuram talked about.... The Royal Guards had their abilities adjusted because they were NPCs. If users did this then their stats wouldn’t change by even 0.00001.

“.....We’re late.”

“Yes. We took too much time.”

Marquis Martin sighed and nodded.

2 bodies that looked like beehives were scattered in front of them. There was no need to think about it. Only a metal skeleton of the emergency pod remained. The crew members had been killed by the Nakuma.

“I didn’t expect all the crew members to be unharmed but this is still heartbreaking.”

“But at least many of them still managed to join Marquis-nim.”

Fay said as he looked at the people around them. As Marquis Martin said, all the emergency pods from the Noblesse were gathered in one area.

After Hoksullo detected 3 emergency signals simultaneously, he detected most of the emergency pods in a range of a dozen kilometres. And most of them were being attacked by Nakuma. Marquis Martin, Ark, Hoksullo and Fay earnestly started their rescue operation.

It wasn't easy in the beginning. They took a lot of time to handle the Nakuma.

But once the rescue was successful, their numbers increased. Once their numbers increased, their battle speed became faster and they managed to find all the emergency pods within half a day. But that didn't mean all the crew members were rescued.

50 emergency pods had escaped from the Noblesse. However, more than 20 were being attacked by Nakuma when Marquis Martin's group arrived.

Although they fought fiercely, some of the members had been killed by the Nakuma. But 60 crew members managed to join them.

“More than half has been rescued. It is all thanks to Marquis-nim determining the location when the emergency pods were falling. That alone is enough to make Marquis-nim deserve the title of hero, unlike someone else.”

“Captain Fay-nim, words like that are a little....”

Hoksullo frowned at Fay's attitude.

“You've talked about Ark-nim many times. He is still lacking compared to Marquis-nim but he does deserve the title of hero.”

“I feel like that as well.”

“Then why are you like this?”

Fay turned around. Fay as looking at Ark who was....

Dwijik dwijik, kang kang! Dwijik dwijik, kang kang!

He was looking through the remnants of the Nakuma for useful parts. Fay shook his head with a disgusted expression.

“I can’t attach the word hero to someone with that type of behaviour.”

“Hyung-nim....no, Ark-nim!”

“Huh? Why?”

“What are you doing?”

“Can’t you tell just by looking? I’ve looking for useful parts.”

“That’s not what I’m asking! Is this the time to be doing something like that? The search for the crew members is over but we are still in a distressed state! We need to discuss how to escape this planet!”

“Okay, I understand. Just let me look behind that.”

Ark searched through the wreckage before jumping out.

“Yes, what should we talk about from now on?”

“Really....”

Hoksullo sighed and shook his head.

On the other hand, Fay seemed to be having trouble holding back his tongue. Ark wasn’t stupid. He knew why Hoksullo and Fay made such expressions.

But to be honest....

Ark had no room to complain.

He naturally didn’t like Fay’s attitude. However, Fay’s words weren’t completely wrong. Ark might be called Beltana’s Hero but it was true that he

was lacking compared to Maquis Martin.

It wasn't just looking at combat power. Ark was always at the forefront when battling with the Nakuma. But it wasn't a desperate fight like the one on the stone mountain. No, he didn't need to desperately fight. He didn't need to use any special skill and just moved on to another Nakuma after a hit.

There was a reason for it. The Nakuma were mechanical lifeforms. Ark used a sword to damage their shield but his offense decreased once their shields were removed.

On the other hand, Marquis Martin and the other crew members mainly used guns as their weapons. It was more efficient for Ark to move on to another Nakuma once the shield was disabled.

But Ark didn't explain that.

And there were no complaints. He used such an excuse to strike the Nakuma and gain experience.

-Your level has risen!

In the meantime, his level had risen once again. In addition, he summoned Bao to steal some experience as will! Bao gained 11 levels in half a day to reach 50.

-<Parts: Optical Sensors> has been acquired.

-<Parts: Adamantium Armour> has been acquired....

Furthermore, Ark also gobbled up the loot after the battle ended! Marquis Martin and Fay didn't care about such spoils.

It was incomprehensible to Ark. Of course, the situation wasn't good. It felt bad to see the bodies of their colleagues. But this was a different problem.

Picking up the loot didn't change the fact that their colleagues were dead. It was unthinkable that he wouldn't pick up money right in front of him.

And there wasn't enough time for Ark to build a friendship with them so he didn't feel the bitterness of the crew's death. Therefore there was a suk sak suk sound at the end of every battle.

Kang kang (sound of metal moving)!

He used Metallurgy to pick up the expensive machinery.

In addition to Fay, the other crew members didn't look at Ark with a good expression....

It wasn't just that.

–The terrain here isn't good. We need to lure the Nakuma.

–We should think about how to divide the personnel. But there isn't enough communications equipment to distribute. The troops joining them meant they couldn't move quickly. The distance limitation was 500 metres. Several emergency supplies were distributed.

–If we rush blindly then our colleagues might be at risk from the Nakuma. It is necessary to divide the army to lessen the attention of the Nakuma.

–There are quite a few of them. In this case, a frontal breakthrough might be better.

Marquis Martin was an ambassador. Marquis Martin didn't need to think after the small fight with the tentacles.

He immediately determined the situation and moved into action. His personality was completely different from Ark who always carefully prepared

for a situation. But that didn't mean that Marquis Martin was wrong.

Whether his judgement was correct or not, Marquis Martin's quick judgement and behaviour was effective to give confidence to the crew members. Ark was less helpful as he stood next to Marquis Martin.

No, he wasn't just doing that.

-You have gained enlightenment from observing an excellent commander.

Sometimes you will have a chance to meet NPC heroes with great leadership on the battlefield. Study the leadership ability of the commander. Watching the commander leading their subordinates or using tactic can give you enlightenment. Your leadership has increased by watching Marquis Martin who has once been lauded as a hero.

<Leadership +15>

His leadership had risen.

In half a day, his leadership rose all the way to 40 points! This was the bonus to watching a hero like Marquis Martin.

Fay's acted like that because he was Marquis Martin's subordinate. Watching Marquis Martin would affect the way he commanded the employees of Dark Eden.

Anyway!

Ark gained quite a bit even in this situation. The crew members might look at him with dissatisfied eyes but he didn't make any excuses.

Justification was useless! This was Ark's unchanging view of life.

It was different if he was talking about his information sponsor, the VVIP Marquis Martin.

"You shouldn't pack parts in this situation."

Again, there is no such thing as a free giveaway.

"You should consider my circumstances. I'm not rich like Marquis-nim. I might be a sector manager but I always need more money to maintain it."

"Then you should go back alive."

"Marquis-nim has an idea?"

"I don't."

Marquis Martin replied with a grin.

"At the moment, all the surviving crew members have joined us. Now what should we do?"

"Marquis-nim, why are you saying such a thing....?"

"Stop."

Marquis Martin cut off Fay. And his eyes narrowed as he looked back at Ark.

"Why don't you look at the remnants of the Nakuma? You were the only member on the Noblesse who managed to see Ikyullos. That wasn't a coincidence. Furthermore, you didn't seem distressed when the crew members were worrying about how to escape this planet. I think that you know what to do. Please speak. Do you see something that we can't?"

Ark was startled. He didn't think Marquis Martin's insight would be so keen. Martin's words were true.

Ark hadn't lost his spirit. The crew members couldn't find a way to escape from Ikyullos. Ark's purpose wasn't to escape from Ikyullos but to restore it to its original state!

Therefore Ark had been looking for 'something' the entire time. Ark had detected a black shape that emerged from the bodies of the Nakuma.

'I didn't know when I saw it on the stone mountain but now I am sure. The Nakuma wasn't just sucked into the sky. They all moved in one direction. That place!'

Ark gazed at the eye of the sandstorm. A vortex connected the back sky and earth. The vortex started swirling a few hours after they started rescuing the crew members.

The black shapes that emerged from the Nakuma had headed towards the vortex. However, Marquis Martin didn't seem to see the black vortex.

Ark could only see it because he invoked the Hajaska rune.

'I was able to view Ikyullos with Hajaska. And the vortex too. Then the vortex might be related to the disappearance incident.'

It was natural to reach such a conclusion.

"Over there right?"

Marquis followed Ark's gaze and nodded.

"Huh? Did you know about it?"

"I wasn't sure. I just received an exhilarating feeling from something over there. Aren't my senses amazing?"

“It is a little scary.”

“Anyone would develop these senses after 10 years on the battlefield. But I don’t have the ability to see what is over there. You are better than me in that regards. Nothing comes for free in this world.”

Marquis Martin laughed and answered.

“There is no need to hesitate if you see something with your eyes. Fay and the crew members. The rations are falling so hurry if you don’t want to eat centipedes.”

They launched into action after Marquis Martin’s words. Then he sneaked a peek at Fay and said.

“How is it? The heroes these days aren’t entirely useless.”

“We’ll see.”

“You will gradually start to realize it.”

Marquis Martin burst into laughter as he started moving.

Almost half the crew members of the Noblesse had been lost after landing on the planet. And there was no knowing what would happen at the destination they were heading to.

Ark’s image of Marquis Martin had also completely changed. That wasn’t a bad thing. If he dared to say it....

-Ark’s appreciation of Marquis Martin has risen by 1,000.

If an NPC could see message windows then they would see the user’s appreciation.

-The more you look, the more you hate it!

Appreciation -1000!

Fay might see that message. Ark was also a person....

Space 6: Now They.....

SPACE 6. Now They.....

“Minus 1, 000 points!”

Tukwak!

“Waaahhh!”

There was a cool sound and a cry of distress. A man flew in a curve and hit the ground. And he bounced like a plump dumpling. The man got up and shouted.

“C-cough! W-why are you doing this?”

“Minus 1, 000 points!”

“Why are you suddenly mentioning minus 1,000 points? No, what is this minus 1,000 points thing?”

“My own assessment method. The so called justice measure.”

“Justice measure?”

“Whether this is the future or the past, the most important value in this world is justice! The world is defined by justice. Evil and injustice is running rampant in this world! We have to fight the enemy!”

A muscular man was standing there raving. He was Justiceman.

Justiceman had started Galaxian because of Isyuram.

The government was being held hostage with the nuclear reactions so a Lucifer Hunting Team was formed with 300 elite agents. However, the original intention was derailed by the division between the Department of Defense and

National Intelligence Agency as both sides deliberately hindered the other faction.

Isyuram's response was to closely monitor the situation.

The Department of Defense and NIS would be separated and observed. Isyuram was in charge of the Department of Defense and Justiceman had the NIS.

The NIS originally were the ones charged with hunting Lucifer. The Department of Defense made plans to participate and interfered with the NIS. The agents from the Department of Defense were more difficult to manage so Isyuram decided to be in charge of them.

And Justiceman was informally given the NIS. They were more manageable than the agents of the Department of Defense but....

'Although I received authorization from Isyuram, I am still a civilian.' It was like a civilian auditor interfering with a government official. But this was a critical issue for the country. In addition, the real estate property of Ark might be involved. The well-being of the country and his family was at stake. 'I need to firm up my mind!'

Justiceman was prepared for significant opposition. But their reaction was unexpected.

"Justiceman?"

"Captain Isyuram has a lot of respect for you."

"You have come. Welcome."

The NIS had a friendly atmosphere and welcomed him. Isyuram was slightly embarrassed but there was a reason for it.

"We have been on the brink of death many times with Captain Isyuram."

“We are aware of how critical our mission is. We aren’t children. Won’t a nuclear explosion damage the country’s economy and environment? We sincerely want to stop Lucifer.”

“But we are civil servants.”

“Yes, the humans above us are just going through the motions.”

“We have no choice but to follow orders from above. Frankly, we didn’t want to do it but we had no choice. How can those above say ‘this is for the sake of the country’ when they give such orders?”

“But Captain Isyuram took issue to it....”

“Oh, don’t misunderstand. Captain Isyuram isn’t to blame. We can already guess the matters behind Captain-nim. His permission means he has to treat us like that. Especially after what we heard about the meeting with the senior officials from the Department of Defense and the Prime Minister’s office. But nothing changed. We continue to be in the middle of the commands coming from above.”

“But now I can only sigh.”

“How will the commands from above be affected now that Justiceman-nim is overseeing us? We can’t hide any information from you. Therefore, we don’t need to be ashamed of our actions or worry about Captain Isyuram-nim being fired as punishment.”

“Justiceman-nim is our saviour!”

The NIS agents had suffered quite a lot while struggling between their heart and mind. Their worries had not disappeared after Justiceman joined. This was the reason why the team members welcomed Justiceman.

‘Korea’s future is still bright!’

The NIS agents liked Justiceman at first.

-Appreciation of the NIS agents towards Justiceman has increased by 1,000 each!

This message wanted to appear!

Such an atmosphere continued for some time. The auditor was only a level 20 beginner. The NIS agents were considerate towards Justiceman and willingly handed him the best equipment.

“Justiceman-nim, the 5th squadron has just sent in this information.”

“This is quite an achievement so should we share it with those from the Department of Defense?”

And the voluntarily provided information to the other faction.

‘I don’t have any work to do.....’

An auditor was a title that uncovered corruption. Finding nothing was a good thing. It was a series of boring routines but Justiceman was satisfied.

However, something happened to make Justiceman angry. The origin of the problem was when the NIS’ company ‘Battle Nations’ receive a request from a merchant.

It was a special request. Production of local factories had decreased due to monster attacks so clearly the strongholds of monsters was a common quest.

The members of Battle Nations were prepared! Their opponents were the monsters attacking the factories. They mobilized 80 people. They were troops with the best equipment.

At the same time, the team members took care of the monsters attacking the factory. They used the momentum to march into the monster’s habitat. And

they arrived at a deep forest habitat.

“...What is this?”

Justiceman looked around with confusion.

The village of an alien species could be seen in the monster’s habitat. The aliens inside the cabins were injured and dying. Justiceman thought they were victims of the monsters. However.....

–Despicable humans! Timaios will curse you!

“Eh? Despicable? Curse? What do you mean?”

–I’m talking about you guys! I don’t have any strength but the ghosts of my ancestors will never forgive you!

The alien with blue skin like a smurf shouted. There was something strange about the atmosphere.

“No no, just calm down and explain it to me step by step. What is the thing you can’t forgive and why are you cursing us? I don’t know the situation here and was just hired.”

–Shut up! You are part of the same group!

“T.h.e.r.e.f.o.r.e!”

Justiceman shouted angrily.

“I don’t know what you are talking about! I don’t want to boast but I have never done something that I have been ashamed of. Of course I’ve never been cursed! That’s why I want an explanation after being cursed out of nowhere!”

Justiceman intimidated the smurfs. And they whispered among themselves until the Papa Smurf like alien said.

–Okay. Then I will tell you. You guys are despicable. You deserve the curse. You

will be punished for your sins after dying.

The Papa Smurf then said. The smurfs were natives of Istana. Just like Earth, Istana was inhabited by many different indigenous people before humans settled there. And they had their own way of living and history.

Yet this incident brought enormous changes to their lives. The emergence of mankind. And the war with the Rama.

–At the time, humans asked for help from the tribes on Istana to face the Rama. But from our point of view, humans and the Rama are both invaders. Some stood on the side of humans but we lived in peace. The ancestors didn't oppose humans settling on Istana but they didn't help in the war. We also respected the opinion of humans. However, that changed after the war.

The Galactic Federation made a system of citizenship. And any tribes who participated in the war were given citizenship. They acted like the master of the planet.

However, the smurfs didn't mind. They weren't interested in human civilization and only wanted to live off nature.

....They were naive to think like that.

–The selfish humans started changing Istana's environment to suit themselves. The forest that had existed for millions of years became a wasteland overnight. It was good up to here. Humans were also desperate in order to live. Humans had to go further away because their cities were unliveable. The tribe understood that fighting would be a losing battle.

So they settled in this village. It was thousands of kilometres deep into the Outlands so even humans didn't come here. They even found rare ores and built factories.

–We no longer have a place to recede to. So some chiefs were asked to visit the factories. We only needed a place for us to live. What was the answer from the humans? Massacre! And slavery! They murdered the chiefs at the factory and stormed this village to take slaves! Would you be able to forgive that? Would you be able to endure it? My people were enslaved, killed and chased!

“Chasing, killing or enslaving my people....”

Justiceman muttered with a blank expression before shouting.

“I will never forgive those bastards!”

–That’s it! So we had no choice but to fight!

Papa Smurf became more agitated at Justiceman’s words.

Therefore the smurfs revolted. They couldn’t produce rough pistol but they were a species that lived in the harsh environment of Istana.

The ability to control monsters was handed down from generation to generation. The smurfs rallied the monsters around them and declared war on the factories. However, they were smashed by Justiceman and the NIS agents.

-Now. This is all that remains after our defeat to you. So we can only do one thing. Just die and curse you...

“That’s wrong!”

Just as the Papa Smurf was sighing with disappointment. Justiceman who had been watching silently shook his head and shouted.

“Even though I didn’t know the circumstances, I am still a lousy human who stood on the side of those who inflicted harm on you. There is no excuse for my intervention. But I can do something. I’m sorry. Please forgive me.”

-Forgive....forgive....?

“I know it is hard to forgive me. I know it. But.....”

–It isn’t hard!

The Papa Smurf shouted. Tears dripped down the Papa Smurf’s face.

–Not hard...forgiveness....it isn’t difficult at all. No, we have been waiting for it. Humans have come for hundreds of years already. There were numerous hardships but we didn’t want to spend our time on revenge or curses. We just wanted one sincere word of apology. And we would accept the apology and act to live together. We endured while wishing for this. One day...one day someone would ask for forgiveness...but it is too late. Yes, it is too late.

“It isn’t too late!”

Justiceman shook his head vigorously.

“When looking at it carefully, humans were in the wrong! I didn’t know the facts! I am a human but I won’t unconditionally take the side of humans. But I believe that there is a way to coexist!”

After Justiceman said this.

-The quest <Wipe Out the Monsters Attacking the Factory> has received a branching quest!

-While completing the <Wipe Out the Monsters Attacking the Factory> quest, you discovered that an indigenous species of Istana was behind the monsters. And you heard that they never wanted to attack the factory. You are sympathetic to the cause of the Mauri Clan and as a result, you are placed at a crossroads of choice.

One, you can eliminate them like the client requested. Or two, you can stand on the side of the Mauri Clan and find a way to convince the clients to release the slaves and coexist.

Your fame and compensation with the client will be affected. Think carefully before making your decision.

A choice had emerged.

However, this wasn't a problem to Justiceman. Justiceman was the attack leader but he had given all the experience to the NIS agents. Justiceman was the auditor. He was like an executive in charge of the NIS agents. He called the leader of the team, Rain over to discuss it.

Rain's answer....

"There is no need to worry."

"No need to worry?"

"Yes. One of the 4 large companies in the Galactic Federation, the Hell Lion was the one who commissioned us to clear out the factory. If we handle this job without any noise then we will receive a substantial reward and Hell Lion will subcontract us for one year. This is an opportunity to rapidly grow our company."

"So?"

"Then it is better to proceed like the client wanted. Take a look at them. They are a tribe living in cabins surrounded by monsters. We won't be able to get

anything even if we are on their side. It is better to maintain a good impression with Hell Lion.”

“Then you want me to pretend I hadn’t heard any of that?”

“It is uncomfortable but the best option.”

“Uncomfortable? Best?”

Justiceman’s brow furrowed. And he gripped Rain’s collar and threw him!

“Minus 1,000 points! You bastards!”

...This concluded the process of how Rain was thrown into the ground.

“Whether this is the future or the past, the most important value in this world is justice! The world is defined by justice. Evil and injustice is running rampant in this world! We have to fight the enemy!”

And the speech that Justiceman gave! However, Rain still had a puzzled expression.

“J-Justiceman-nim, aren’t you mistaken? This is a virtual reality. No matter how real this is, they are still just NPCs! Furthermore, we aren’t playing this game for fun. Our purpose is to protect the country!”

“Protect the country? Ha! Now I know.”

“Huh? Know?”

“What are you saying about protecting the country?”

“That.....”

“The country. Powerless people. For the sake of our country, we need to protect the powerless people. I’m not sure when the country became so rotten that our agencies have forgotten about the people. Don’t make me laugh. If you don’t do it then who will?”

Justiceman looked at the remaining team members who were scared.

“You know why the Lucifer Hunting team was created. And keep in mind that the orders from above are from selfish people. Yet you have no choice but to follow their commands. But I want to ask. How can you say ignore those guys when they are going through the same pain?”

“B-But we....”

“No power. So let me ask you. What power does the NIS have if you can’t help those people? Politics emerge from your mouth when it opens. Your country and its people. But the selfish leaders aren’t telling the public anything about Lucifer. How will we reply if confronted by the public? You should know the situation. But you were silent even against unreasonable commands. Because you are cowards.”

“Cowards? That is too harsh!”

Rain jumped up and shouted.

“Shut up! I will say even more severe words!”

Justiceman yelled with shining eyes.

“It doesn’t matter if you originally weren’t cowards. This is a despicable way of living. But I don’t blame you. You are working for the country and its people. This means you shouldn’t surrender. It doesn’t matter the opponent or the circumstances! Justice is the truth. Your opponent might be stronger than me but making excuses is rather pathetic.”

Rain and the team members were silent. They didn’t agree with Justiceman. They knew what he wanted to say but it didn’t fit with their sense of reality. But what was the alternative? This overwhelming force? The strange persuasion method?

They looked back several times but still didn't think they did anything wrong. However, they obediently nodded.

"So? What does Justiceman want to do?"

"I have to draw a firm line. When looking at this situation, it is obvious unjust. Then the answer is obvious."

"But the request is from the branch director of Hell Lion."

Rain said.

"And he is unaware of the situation and asked us to subjugate monsters. In other words, the Mauri Clan. Furthermore, we don't want to turn Hell Lion into our enemies. Won't that cause a disadvantage in our efforts to protect the country?"

"Hardships will follow when trying to achieve justice. Does who want justice shouldn't fear suffering."

They couldn't talk to this guy. Rain shook his head as he gave up and asked.

"Okay. We will follow Justiceman-nim's decision. But a great person like Justiceman-nim should be able to solve the situation. Justiceman-nim should present a situation. That should suffice."

Rain looked at Justiceman with sharp eyes.

"We had created quite a large budget for the Battle Nations company. If any damage is dealt to the company then Justiceman-nim will have to take responsibility. In some cases, Isyuram might not be able to avoid responsibility as an auditor. Keep this in mind when you answer. Doesn't Justiceman-nim know that this won't be resolved with just a few words? Now, what should we do?"

"Let's see....."

Isyuram scratched his head.

He was the person making a fuss about justice. It would be hypocritical if he opened his mouth to complain about taking responsibility. Rain had that thought as he watched Justiceman.

Justiceman just turned his head and laughed.

“Shall we try to occupy the factory?”

“This place....”

Harley stuttered with a stiff expression. Hawk checked it and nodded.

“Yes, this is the right place.”

Hawk had a small disc in his hands.

It was divided into five part, each with the symbols of the five elements such as wood, water, metal, earth and fire.

Of course, it wasn't free. Everything in this world was give and take. If he received something then something needed to be paid.

‘But this really isn't a joke. Many users have already fallen to the hands of Carly. I know Carly because of the Seven Swords but still think he is disgusting. That son of a bitch, he knew what I was tracking and made such an absurd claim!’

However, Hawk was forced to accept the conditions. Carly had traced down the Five Elements disc that was an important item to Hawk. It was associated with Hawk's profession.

The Five Elements disc wasn't just a decorative item. The real purpose of the Five Elements disc was to act like a compass to point towards an ancient species. It was simply a compass but it pointed to the stash of the ancient

species.

This was the reason Hawk momentarily let go of Ark. Hawk used the Five Elements disc to voyage through the space frontier and finally arrived at a deep crater in an asteroid.

This was obviously the place Hawk was looking for. Hawk's battleship Death Knight floated above the asteroid. A large stone several times larger than the battleship was erected in front of him.

"A strange stone statue."

"A Buddha Idol."

"Buddha...."

Harley had an expression that indicated he didn't understand but didn't ask anything further.

"Should we take a quick look with the optical scanner?"

"There is no need. Anyway, I will proceed alone from here. I will go and look at it directly. It might take a long time so you should go to the Death Knight. Take care and don't report trivial things to me."

"I understand."

His personal aide replied as Hawk headed to the upper deck. He was wearing a space suit with external jets and used it to reach the Buddha.

A giant locked in darkness. The Death Knight lit up the place but the Buddha was still creepy. He swam through the weightless space and looked at the Buddha.

"...Here?"

Haw narrowed his eyes and focused his attention. The Buddha was covered in

thick layers of dust, proving it had been there for many years.

He checked the Five Elements disc before moving. And that shape was carved into the statue's hand.

If that was the case, he had one method to try.

"It is a surprisingly simple process."

Hawk grinned and set the disc on the palm of the hand.

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa!

It wasn't surprising but the palm shook and the Buddha vibrated. It was like Hawk expected up to here. But an unexpected situation occurred in the next moment. Thousands of swords emerged from the hand of Buddha and flew towards Hawk.

"W-what? This is?"

Hawk burst out with confusion and rapidly used his jets. Compressed air flew out of the jets and Hawk narrowly avoided the swords. But in the next moment, the swords moved like a snake and headed towards Hawk again. Avoiding the swords had its limitations in an area like this. And the moment the wave of swords was about to cover Hawk!

"Fire! Chasing Shadows!"

Two streams of light exploded forward. They were his two swords with yin and yang engraved on them.

Black lights emerged and blasted the wave of swords in every direction. However, two swords couldn't prevent the hundreds of swords. The wave of swords promptly enveloped Hawk.

Kakakaka! Snap!

Hawk received a devastating impact and was thrown into the Buddha. He checked his health and noticed that it had been reduced by 40%. However, his space suit was in a more serious condition.

Syu syu syu syu syu!

-Warning!

The spacesuit has been damaged and oxygen is leaking!

Rapid emergency actions are required. Quickly return to the ship!

<Oxygen Levels: 70%, 65%.....>

The warning message appeared along with the sound of wind rushing at his back.

The external spacesuit was designed to withstand quite a large impact. Users wearing a spaceship in space would die if their suits were torn. There was a damage limit! For example, a bomb or an enemy at least level 100 would suffer a detrimental blow to the spacesuit.

This type of situation in outer space was fatal to a user! He still had health but if all his oxygen leaked then he would die in a matter of minutes! Of course, he could obstruct the damage area with tape to some extent but....

‘D-don’t touch the arms!’

....He couldn’t escape the reach of the arms due to the damage. Thanks to

that, Hawk was unable to keep his sober image.

–Hawk-nim, danger! Avoid it! We'll cover you!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Harley shouted while firing with the Death Knight's guns. The wave of swords pushing toward hawk was engulfed in flames in an instant. But that was it. Not one sword was destroyed after being hit. Instead, the swords turned to the direction of the Death Knight and caused minor wounds on the armour.

"Harley, retreat!"

–B-but Hawk-nim....

"Don't you know? This is the defense system of the ancient species. It isn't something that the weapons of the Death Knight can deal with."

–But I can't just leave Hawk-nim!

"No, you have completed your role. I recovered my head thanks to the time you bought me. The swords are a defense system against intruders and a gateway to test the successor. In other words, I am eligible to obtain the power of the ancient species. If so, there must be a way I can deal with the swords. So the Death Knight needs to retreat before it is too late. This is a command."

–.....I understand.

Harley's voice was heard soon after. The Death Knight started to drift away from the Buddha. And after it was a certain distance away, the swords veered from the Death Knight back to Hawk. The thousands of swords flew towards him and covered the entire space like arrows flying in an ancient war!

'There is no place to avoid it. No, I can't see any with my eyes. But.....'

Hawk jumped towards the Buddha statue. And stopped dozens of metres to the right side of the Buddha.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Thousands of swords penetrated the space. However, only one sword grazed Hawk.

‘Yes, this is the answer!’

Hawk had an elated smile on his face.

‘There is a way to turn off the defense system!’

It was the Chinese characters carved on the Buddha. It said ‘the successor can enter the castle.’ It meant he needed to use the five elements.

In fact, Hawk had been confused about that. Hawk interpreted it to mean the Five Elements disc would open the door. But the door didn’t open and he was attacked out of the blue so he thought there was a problem.

However, that writing was the key.

‘The order of the five elements. Wood, fire, earth, metal, water.’ These five elements also pointed towards a direction. Wood was east, fire was south, earth was centre, gold was west and water north. The defense system was also attacking in those directions. Wood is east, east is to the right so I need to move to the right side of the Buddha!’

This was one of the reasons why Hawk moved to the right side of the Buddha. This was the result. Hawk entered an area where he wasn’t hit by the swords. Hawk’s reasoning hit the mark.

Chwararara! Chwararara!

Meanwhile, the thousands of swords formed a complicated tangle and flew towards Hawk again. However, the attack wasn’t a threat anymore.

Hawk flew in the south, central, west, *etc.* directions according to the defense system....in other words, he moved below the Buddha, to the left *etc.* without

any of the swords touching him. And when he moved to the head (North) of the Buddha during the last step.

This time the swords didn't hurtle towards Hawk. They split to the left and right and returned to the Buddha's hand.

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

The Buddha's hand rumbled and moved. And he stumbled as the palms clapped together, causing a blue light to emerge at the centre.

Surprisingly, a completely different world stretched out beyond the blue light. A land where lava flowed from volcanoes and pillars of fire shooting up everywhere!

"...I've found it!"

Hawk's eyes lit up.

"This is my chance to become the Oritious' Elim! The second half of the Asura Wave sword is sealed here!"

It was obviously dangerous. Hawk flew in without hesitation.

Kkiik.

The door opened and one person entered. The man stood at the entrance and looked around for a while.

Right now it was lunch time but the underground cage meant there was a dim light. He was meeting someone but didn't know their face. He pulled out his phone while looking around the people sitting at the table.

Diririri. Diririri.

There was the sound of ringing from a nearby table. Four people were sitting

around the table. The man on his phone confirmed their identities and walked towards them.

“Don’t worry about picking up. I’m here.”

“Then you are....”

“Yes, I’m Valencia the meeting organizer.”

The man sat in an empty seat and replied. And after silently examining the people sitting at the table, he opened his mouth again.

“I thought more people wanted to join....”

“All of them are gathered.”

“Less than I thought.”

“You are the one who contacted our Galaxian IDs and disturbed us. The SNS said that we could only participate after meeting. Why should they come?”

“You did.”

Valencia outright said.

“We aren’t gathered here for a simple social reason. The point of this meeting is to gather to achieve our goals. In order to do that, believe in each other is important. If you hadn’t met the pre-requisite then this meeting wouldn’t have happened. There is no point if someone can’t even attends a face to face meeting.”

“Uh.....”

The man swallowed his saliva at the words. And there was a heavy silence for a while. Then one man opened with a careful expression.

“I’ll confirm it first. I heard this meeting is to form an alliance to deal with the user Ark. Is this correct?”

“That’s right.”

Valencia nodded.

“Whether it is small or large, each of the people here are playing Galaxian and have a grudge against Ark. Including myself, all of us want revenge. But Ark has already established his own forces in Galaxian. I don’t want to admit it but I can’t defeat him. He has strong individual player and it is hard to strike him. No, we would most likely suffer. So that’s why I organized this meeting.”

Not long ago, Hawk had met with Valencia.

Valencia hadn’t given up on revenge and was promised a rewarding offer to defeat Ark. But Valencia didn’t accept it entirely.

He couldn’t believe in Hawk. It wasn’t publicized but Valencia knew about the results of the magic circle investigation. Hawk participated in the quest and everyone believed he would gain the best achievements. But Ark stole it from him.

Hawk had a reason to confront Ark. Valencia couldn’t trust him. Like he said, Ark already built his own forces. On the other hand , Valencia lost everything in a conflict with Ark.

‘Hawk promised support but in the end, I will be the one dealing with Ark. I was insufficient before. But I have to admit it. Beltana, Fargo and Impeltus. It isn’t a coincidence that I suffered three times under Ark. My skills are inferior to Ark. The quality of Hawk’s support can’t fill all the difference.’

Then the answer was simple. Valencia remembered the situation a few months ago when Ark first became Beltana’s hero. Ark’s fame increased in Galaxian but that wasn’t always a blessing.

‘Most of them are just jealous of famous users. But some of them will have a

real grudge against Ark. If I am able to gather their strength....’

In the meantime, Valencia did one thing. He collected all the users with a grudge against Ark in one place.

Valencia posted on various Galaxian related community boards and contacted users who wanted revenge against Ark. 30 people had replied. However, only 4 people were gathered in real life. That’s why those words first emerged from his mouth.

But Valencia wasn’t disappointed.

“I was disappointed because I thought there would be a lot of people. But after thinking about it, I think it turned out well. It makes sense that we can’t trust large numbers. This is also the reason why I had such a reason. Due to the nature of gamers, coming to a place like this isn’t an easy task. Nevertheless, the fact that you are here means you have a grudge against Ark.”

Then one man raised his hands.

“But I want to check something before that.”

“What is it?”

“Are you sure that Beltana’s Ark is ‘him’?”

“Yes, I wanted to ask the same question. I clearly have a grudge against Ark. But it isn’t the Ark inside Galaxian. New World’s Ark. This is the reason why the 30 people from the community boards disappeared before this meeting. New World’s published stated that ‘he’ never played Galaxian. That is the issue. If Valencia says that Ark isn’t ‘him’ then I have no reason to join.”

“It is for sure.”

“But Global Exos....”

“I don’t know the details of the matter. I don’t know the private reasons

behind Ark joining Galaxian. But 'he' is the Ark known as Beltana's Hero."

"Is there any information to prove it?"

"No. But there is someone who will guarantee this."

"Guarantee? Who do you mean?"

"Hawk."

"Hawk? The Hawk you're talking about...."

"The member of the Seven Swords. In fact, the person who is my supporter is Hawk. Hawk isn't at this meeting but he promised to support us."

The people at the table murmured after Hawk's words.

The users gathered had expected a large support but they never it would be Hawk. The people had divided reactions after hearing Hawk's name. Some users had the opinion that Hawk was used to manipulate the situation.

To be honest, Valencia was also the same. It was a definite fact that Hawk was only using him. Nevertheless, Valencia had accepted his offer. Hawk wasn't good. He had a lot of hate towards Ark.

"You might think it is suspicious. You can fight against Ark if you participate in the alliance but this will be a hindrance to your gameplay. I also know that much. Quite a few troubles will emerge. So I won't say any more. I want reliable people. If you feel any hesitation then you are welcome to leave now. However, I will promise you one thing. I w.i.l.l n.o.t g.i.v.e u.p."

Valencia said firmly.

He truly wanted people who wouldn't back out later in the future. Valencia nodded as they stayed sitting down.

"Thank you. As of this time, we are allies."

“So we need a name.”

“You might’ve got the wrong 5 people so how about Mistaken?”

“Mistaken is okay.”

An alliance was created in that atmosphere. The name was Mistaken. The purpose of this alliance was to break Ark. Their aim was to cooperate and monitor Ark while increasing their strength in order to deal a fatal blow to Ark!

“Just imagining it is pleasant.”

“Then let’s introduce ourselves before having a formal discussion. Preferably the reason why you have a grudge against Ark.”

“I also think that as well. I will introduce myself first. I am Mald. The other people think he is unfair in New World but I suffered in Galaxian. I met him in the place called Nephalim....”

“Desperate people are attracted.”

While a user was in the middle of his introduction. A young man sitting at the next table stood up and muttered. Mald stopped his introduction and frowned.

“What? You? Did you mean me?”

“It means all of you.”

The youth said in a low voice.

“Pathetic people attending a meeting to try and beat Ark. Resentment? Gathering power? You thought of this idea because you suck when alone. But this won’t change even if your numbers increase. Do you think that you people will be enough to win? Furthermore, your name is Mistaken? If you stood in front of Ark and applied for a duel then you would be shaking.”

“You bastard! What did you say?”

“You heard me. So I am leaving. Have fun.”

The young man turned around. Then Valencia shouted with a red face.

“Are you going to run away after saying all of that?”

“Run away? Me?”

“Are you going to run away without telling us your identity?”

“...I see. Okay. I’ll tell you.” I am a user in Galaxian. Come find my at any time if you feel bad about my words. I’ll be your opponent. I am a Rama but I won’t be difficult to find in the space frontier. This isn’t my formal name but if you want to see me, ask for my nickname in Kwain.”

“Nickname?”

“The Red Slaughterer.”

The youth exited the cafe after saying that.

“Certainly.....”

A sandy wilderness. There were dozens of sand dunes with a wavy effect. Three men were heading down the gently slope of a hill.

Marquis Martin, Fay and Ark.

“I have a thrilling feeling.”

“I feel it too. An impression like my skin is burning.”

“Oh, you’re not an amateur now?”

“Stop. Marquis-nim has spent 10 years on the battlefield while he has less than two. He can’t compare to Marquis-nim who is a veteran soldier. He has only received the Hero title for 1 year but he isn’t a genius....

Fay said while peeking at Ark. Marquis Martin laughed and shook his head.

“You are still stubborn. So you don’t like him?”

“It isn’t a matter of not liking him. I am a soldier and have the pride of a soldier. And I think a hero needs to have the appropriate quality and skills to match.”

“Quality and skills....”

Marquis Martin shrugged and looked at Ark.

“Well, I’m not sure about quality and skills but he definitely has a special talent. At least you can see that. Ark, do you understand? My eyes can’t see anything. So don’t you think you should explain it? Hey Ark!”

“Huh? Ah, yes. I’m sorry.”

Ark glanced back at Marquis Martin after a small pause.

Once again, Ark had engaged in a fierce battle to rescue the crew of the Noblesse from the Nakuma. However, that was just the beginning. There was no point if they couldn’t escape from the castle.

Before the Noblesse sunk, Hoksullo sent a SOS to the western headquarters but there was no guarantee the rescue operation would work.

No, it would be difficult. Ikyullos was still in an undetectable state. Ark was convinced of it. The only way for them to escape the planet was to identify the cause and resolve it.

‘And the answer is probably....’

Ark’s gaze headed over the hill. They had joined up with the survivors of the Noblesse half a day ago. Ark’s companions marched 30 kilometres through turbulent sandstorms while fighting the Nakuma.

It was for the sake of coming here. The swirling whirlwind that sucked up the black shapes that emerged from the bodies of the Nakuma.

‘.....There is no doubt about it! This is the cause!’

Ark’s Hajaska rune allowed him to see a great scene unfolding in front of him. Marquis Martin, Ark and Fay arrived at the hill where the whirlwind emerged from a pit in the ground.

This was the centre of the black swirl. It was invisible but Marquis Martin could feel the enormous power surge as the vortex connected with the sunspot in the sky. Marquis Martin clicked his tongue at Ark’s words.

“It is a great pity that I can’t see this.”

“What is that thing?”

“Let’s see? I’ve had a lot of experience travelling around the galaxy but I can’t even make a guess. How can I know without seeing it?”

Marquis Martin looked at Ark and said. He couldn’t see it with his eyes.

“No, I can’t guess even if I saw it.”

“Someone like Fay won’t be able to know even if he rolls his head. And in fact, Ark doesn’t need to worry about the black swirl right now. I already know where to find the answer.”

“You already know where to find the answer?”

“Isn’t it obvious? The ‘thing’ that covered Ikyullos is the one that attacked the Noblesse. That ‘something’ is likely the sunspot. And if Ark’s words are true then the centre of that crater is associated with the sunspot. The vortex connects the black sky and this crater. The sunspot was created due to the crater or vice versa. It means that something is happening in the crater. Then shouldn’t we go in and check? It is the obvious answer. We don’t need to think

about anything other than that goal. Concentrate only on the goal. That is how I was able to survive in numerous battlefields.”

Ark had to agree. Anyway, this was a situation where nothing could be guaranteed.

If so, it would be better to focus on the productive things. And there was no room to worry about anything else. The reason Ark, Marquis Martin and Fay were hiding their bodies wasn't simply to avoid the sandstorm.

Many Nakuma were gathered around the crater.

“The main point will be those guys.”

“Exactly.”

Marquis Martin nodded and then asked.

“Fay, what is the current battle personnel?”

“43 members of the special guards are gathered. And the remaining 26 are regular crew members like Hoksullo, with 10 of them combat capable.”

“Then we can mobilize 53 people?”

Marquis Martin sighed with frustration.

They counted approximately 400~500 Nakuma around the crater. Furthermore, their experience indicated that these Nakuma had superior attack power compared to those on Istana.

They had 53 people against 400~500 Nakuma. Marquis Martin knew if he delayed then the damage to the crew would worsen. He had to believe the odds were good enough to win. He wouldn't attack while still ignorant.

But the situation this time was different. No matter how good the special guards were, the probability of winning was less than 10%.

“That is good enough.”

Fay said with a resolute look.

“The special guards aren’t afraid of death!”

“That isn’t something to be proud of.”

“What?”

Fay huffed at Ark’s words.

“Are you insulting the special guards? The special guards are Marquis-nim’s personal troops. It is our mission to protect Marquis-nim no matter the circumstances. We are proud to dedicate our lives to this mission.”

“But what will happen to Marquis-nim if you die? Survive somehow. Doesn’t that make more sense?”

“I mean.....”

“Plus....”

Ark turned his eyes towards Fay.

“Our purpose isn’t to wipe out the Nakuma but to figure out what is happening in the centre of the crater. But we still don’t know what is inside. Therefore it doesn’t make sense if you die while trying to wipe out the Nakuma.”

“You dare....”

“Ark is right.”

Marquis Martin interrupted the huffing Fay. And he looked at Ark with a funny expression.

“However, that doesn’t mean that anyone can do it. Don’t criticize unless you can come up with an alternative method. It looks like you’re not just saying

that. Did you think of something?”

“Marquis-nim, you can’t have expectations from him....”

“I do.”

“What? That guy.....”

“Oh, do you have something to say? Do you have a plan ready?”

“Marquis-nim, those words....”

“People are required. 30 people will do.”

“I’m glad. A cruiser or hydrogen bomb is needed to deal with 500 monsters. Fortunately we managed to save 30 people. Fay, gather 30 of the outstanding special guards and give them to Ark.”

Fay shouted with a displeased expression.

“M-Marquis-nim!”

“No, I don’t need the special guards.”

Ark shook his head and replied. And he laughed with a confident expression before saying.

“Please give me the 26 regular firemen.”

“Firemen?”

“Yes, and the duration of the day. That will be enough.”

“Is that really necessary?”

“Please watch over the Nakuma from here.”

“You want us to wait obediently? How interesting. Okay, I won’t ask about what you are trying to do. I will watch what you can do in this situation.”

Marquis Martin grinned and nodded.

Space 7: Rajenka's Inscriptions

SPACE 7. Rajenka's Inscriptions

"That stupid bastard...!"

Fay burst out with a frown. The idea of Ark taking 26 engineers to take care of the Nakuma around the crater was so ridiculous that Fay couldn't ignore it.

"Do you have something to say?"

"Rather than rushing blindly...yes."

"Then leave. Try it your way."

Martin Marquis accepted his request with only a small amount of words. Fay couldn't accept the idea. Was he saying that crew members would be entrusted to Fay? However, Marquis Martin's command was absolute.

"I will use my authority as a Marquis to entrust 26 troops to you. But keep this in mind. I will never forgive you if they die in vain."

Fay was harshly warned.

So far, Ark had only shown an appearance of picking up the remnants of the Nakuma so Fay didn't have a lot of faith in him. But things finally burst today.

Ark had taken the crew members somewhere and disappeared. Fay watched the Nakuma around the crater with a frustrated expression.

"As an alternative to what Ark is doing...."

"Why are you so nervous?"

"It seems like a waste of time. Ark has stated that this isn't an urgent

situation. But we don't have a lot of time. The remaining food can only last for two more days. Despite the toxicity of the insects being alleviated, not many crew members can eat them. Every minute and second is important in saving their lives. Yet our valuable time...."

"Are you saying he should return in a hurry? It would be best if the damage could be reduced."

"I don't believe that. The engineers...."

Tu tu tu tu! Tang! Tang! Tang!

Then the sound of gunshots were heard over the hills. Marquis Martin and Fay flinched and raised their heads.

They were hiding on the hill opposite the crater where Ark and the engineers were attacking the Nakuma.

The number had decreased by less than half and he could only see 10 people. The strength of 10 people couldn't face 400~500 Nakuma.

"...Is his idea to kill them all?"

Fay muttered as he rose to his feet. Then Marquis Martin raised his hands and narrowed his eyes.

"Please wait. There is something strange. Ark brought less than half of the troops to attack the Nakuma. Furthermore, they are the engineers. Ark isn't reckless enough to fight the Nakuma with that amount of people. He must have an idea."

"What idea is he thinking of?"

Fay shouted angrily.

"I'm sick of seeing people like that on the battlefield. Maybe he was stupid enough to lose the engineers along the way. That guy is probably brazen

enough not to return. It is so he can protect his pride. Isn't that why he asked for help? Those engineers were just herded to their deaths."

"No, such a thing...."

Marquis Martin said as he gazed at the battlefield.

"The crew members are in a proper formation. And they're not blindly attacking. At first it seems rushed but they are maintaining a proper distance from the Nakuma and are focused on defending. In my eyes, they seem to be in control."

Tu tu tu tu! Tang! Tang! Tang!

Fay spoke with a desperate expression as the gunfire continued.

"They are receiving the counterattack of the Nakuma! Now is not the time for this! If we hesitate any longer than the engineers will be wiped out!"

"No, watch a little more."

"Marquis-nim!"

"Ark doesn't just have 10 troops. If we lose our rationality and attack with the special guards then it might ruin Ark's plan. There is also a risk of losing the special guards. We don't know the plan so we should just watch without moving."

The battle changed shortly afterwards.

Ark's unit on the edge of the crater started to retreat from the Nakuma. But the Nakuma had received bullets out of the blue and were quite upset. Ark and the troops withdrew from the crater and a chase commenced. The black crater was instantly emptied of Nakuma.

Fay stuttered with a puzzled expression.

“D-don’t tell me Ark was aiming for this....”

The situation was clear once he saw the results.

Ark had lured the Nakuma gathered at the crater.

However, Ark only used 10 people. There were 400~500 Nakuma chasing them. Even if the other members were hiding somewhere for an ambush, the numbers meant it was impossible to wipe them out. In addition, they couldn’t outrun the pursuit of the Nakuma and will probably soon....

“That Ark bastard, don’t tell me he meant to die from the beginning?”

Fay glanced back at Marquis Martin.

In this situation, Ark’s unit would be completely destroyed. If Ark intended this from the beginning then he meant to pave the way for Marquis Martin and the special guards. That’s why he took engineers who weren’t a big help in battle.

He thought about the need to preserve troops in the future and knew that losing engineers wouldn’t have a significant impact on their power.

“Stupid bastard...such a favour...did you think I would give you a compliment?”

“Let’s see?”

Marquis Martin scratched his head.

“As far as I know, Ark isn’t the type of person to do something like this for a compliment....”

“Who would praise him? Sacrificing yourself for a compliment? I can’t accept something that irresponsible! Never! This...I can’t admit it!”

“You don’t have to go that far.....”

Marquis Martin laughed at Fay's words. And Fay snapped back.

"Now isn't the time to laugh!"

"Yes, I'm not laughing. I'm not sure that he is making a sacrifice but Ark will prepare a path like promised. We can't just watch blankly. And now they are chasing Ark's troops. Fay, gather the special guards. We will head towards the centre of the crater as planned."

".....Dammit!"

Fay spat out a curse before gathering the special guards. And they headed down the hill through the sand storm until they arrived at the crater. The moment they arrived at a large, flat land created by the sand storm.

It mixed with sand and formed a field of glass. Then a metal floor with a brick pattern appeared. In addition, there was a huge slab split in half at the centre.

"This is.....?"

"Marquis-nim, someone is approaching!"

Marquis Martin's eyes had narrowed as he approached the slab. Then he heard the voices of the special guards from behind him.

"Nakuma?"

"I can't confirm it yet! There are dozens of them!"

"Everybody prepare for battle! Create a formation around Marquis-nim!"

Fay gave commands while grabbing his heavy artillery. And looked at the black shapes in the sandstorm.

"Ark, is this the best that dumb bastard can do? You should do it properly! Are you using this time to sleep? Damn Nakuma bastards! Come! I will smash your bodies!"

Cheolkeok! Cheolkeok!

And just as he was about to pull the trigger with a serious expression.

“Hey Captain Fay-nim, it is us!”

“T-this voice is?”

“Captain-nim, the engineers! The engineers given to Ark have returned!”

“What? The engineers have come back?”

Fay lifted his head with incredulity. At the same time, the black shapes in the sandstorm turned into a group of people.

The person jumping up and waving was Hoksullo. There were over 20 engineers behind him. The 26 engineers he thought were dead had come back without one casualty. And the one leading them....

“Ark!”

Fay stuttered with a stunned look.

“Y-you are alive?”

“Huh? Alive? When did I die?”

“No, that.....”

“Fay thought you sacrificed yourself in order to open the path for us.”

Marquis Martin laughed as he glanced between Fay and Ark. Ark had an incredulous expression on his face.

“Me? Why?”

“Let’s see? Maybe he was worried?”

“Captain Fay-nim for me? Hmmm, that is unexpected.”

Ark blinked his eyes and Fay shouted indignantly with a red face.

“W-who was worried about you? Don’t talk nonsense! Marquis-nim, you are being misleading! I was just annoyed that he was selfish enough to put the engineers to death. Then.....”

“I’ve returned alive. There isn’t one casualty.”

“Marquis-nim, did you know about this?”

Fay asked as he turned to Marquis Martin.

“No, I haven’t heard about it. But I knew that Ark isn’t the type of guy to choose death to open the path for me. Fay, you seem to have misunderstood something and have bad feelings towards Ark. Ark choosing to die for me? That is hard to imagine.”

“Of course. Marquis-nim’s life is many times more precious than mine.”

“Well, you are someone who would openly say things like that.”

Marquis Martin said with a wry smile.

“But I am curious. How did you draw away the Nakuma?”

“Listen to this! It is amazing!”

Hoksullo who had been waiting impatiently explained. Ark took 24 engineers and collected all the mechanical parts that dropped in the past day.

Ark’s bag space had run out so he had to leave some remnants of the Nakuma behind. Ark and the engineers piled up the metal debris approximately 10 kilometres away from the crater.

“Indeed.....”

Marquis Martin nodded. He could roughly understand the situation from listening to the explanation.

“The Nakuma instinctively wants to absorb metal. Just before attacking, you

stacked up the machine parts in order to lead them to a certain location? But wasn't it difficult to change the attention of hundreds of Nakuma to the machine parts?"

"I attacked the Nakuma with 10 engineers."

"But there were 24 crew members. There must be a reason the remaining 14 people were separate."

"That's right."

Ark smiled and nodded.

While the operation to attack the Nakuma was taking place, the 14 people were hiding in the pile of machine parts.

And Ark drove the Nakuma near them!

"I made a beacon."

"Beacon?"

"Yes, the crew members that safely joined us had their emergency pods intact. There was approximately 30 emergency pods. Once I led the Nakuma near the pile of machine parts, the crew members turned the beacons of the emergency pods to the maximum output."

The Nakuma have sensors that detected that signal. This was how they could find the exact location of the emergency pods despite the swirling sandstorm. Ark used that property of the Nakuma!

For a Nakuma, sensing an emergency signal was like a smelling a wounded prey. Furthermore, there were 30 such signals. It was like a pile of stacked food for the Nakuma.

A hard to resist temptation! They only had eyes for the food and didn't care about the insolent humans attacking them. Ark had actually been worried when

selecting the machine parts for the Nakuma. Their instinct won over rationality and they filled up their stomachs.

“But will that be able to hold them for a long time?”

“No, it should hold them for a few hours.”

“Evidence?”

“That is the great point of Ark-nim!”

Hoksullo used that chance to jump in again.

“Ark-nim joined all the mechanical parts together. He used screws to tighten the connection between the parts so there are no gaps at all.”

This was the reason Ark took the engineers. They could control the output of the emergency signals as well as tighten screws or weld pieces together. Thanks to that, hundreds of mechanical parts in the pile were attached together.

“No matter how much they want to absorb it, the Nakuma would take at least a few hours.”

“Hahahaha.”

Marquis Martin burst into laughter after the explanation.

“A masterpiece. The Nakuma will be hard pressed to eat hundreds of parts welded together. And the operation to lure them. The Nakuma are classified as a monster but you stimulated their thinking like they are real lifeforms. It is a clever idea. What do you think Fay? Was it a great idea like Hoksullo said?”

“I-I can’t properly recognize this mission!”

Fay shouted and turned his head. Then Marquis Martin smiled and nodded.

“Fay is glad to see that you have all come back unharmed.”

“That....what does that mean?”

Anyway, he couldn't look Ark in the eyes!

He cuffed the feet of the Nakuma but there was no telling how long that would last. They needed to investigate the centre of the crater before the Nakuma devoured the pile of disassembled parts.

Ark's eyes narrowed as he looked at the centre. Ark gazed towards the enormous slab that Marquis Martin had been approaching.

"This....."

"Rajenka's Inscriptions....it seems like it."

"Rajenka's Inscriptions? Rajenka....?"

He once heard those words from Marquis Martin.

Just before leaving Tatuine to investigate the magic circle, Marquis Martin had described an incident involving antimatter that took place on Rajenka.

The Aschulat were studying antimatter on that planet when it exploded and disappeared. This was referred to as the tragedy of Rajenka and caused the 3 powers to sign a treaty prohibiting the study of antimatter.

"You remembered."

Marquis Martin said while nodding.

"It wasn't known externally but this is an artefact called Ooparts that was found on Rajenka."

"Ooparts?"

"It was left behind by an ancient civilization. It was difficult to guess the age of the artefact even with modern equipment. Ooparts was classified as an artefact from one of the 4 races."

"It was related to one of the 4 races?"

“That information isn’t confirmed yet. The characters inscribed on it was estimated to be the language of one of the 4 races.”

Those characters were inscribed on the surface of the broken slab. However, it was the first time Ark had seen such symbols.

Anyway, the slab was in such a place. It was hard to see it as a coincidence. There was a high possibility it was related to the situation occurring on Ikyullos.

“Have the characters been deciphered?”

“It can’t be deciphered. It was impossible to decipher the characters on the Ooparts. The problem is the slab itself.”

“What does that mean.....?”

“At that time, no currently, the Aschulat is the most advanced power in science and technology. But even the technology of the Aschulat couldn’t destroy the slab. Of course, it was a precious research material so they didn’t use full-fledge weapons. However, the Aschulat researchers couldn’t cause even one scratch on the slab. And not long after that, the incident happened.”

“You mean Rajenka’s Tragedy?”

“Yes, the planet was destroyed due to the antimatter explosion. And the Aschulat were silent in regards to the cause of the incident. Therefore, the Rajenka’s Inscriptions called Ooparts was buried in the darkness forever.”

Ark’s brain was all muddled up. It was full of ‘???’ as he wondered about what happened on the planet and the identity of the mysterious slab.

He couldn’t confirm anything. The slab on the destroyed Rajenka was found here. The slab that was on the planet destroyed by the antimatter research was suddenly found on Ark’s planet. It was at this point that the situation was incomprehensible.

Thanks to that, Ark's uncomfortable feeling increased by x1000! However, the slab in front of him had a crucial difference from when it was on Rajenka.

"But isn't there something weird about Rajenka's Inscriptions?"

"It is weird."

Marquis Martin nodded.

Every possible method was used to destroy the slab on Rajenka. But now the slab in front of Ark was split in half. In addition, it had an oddly broken form. It might be a coincidence but the huge crack across the slab looked like....

'.....Wolf?'

It seemed like that in Ark's eyes. A giant wolf crossing the centre of the slab. But Marquis Martin and Fay didn't pay any attention to the specific form of the crack.

"Is this situation really related to Rajenka's Inscriptions?"

"I don't know what to say but....nothing is definite yet. And the situation doesn't change even if it has to do with Rajenka's Inscriptions."

"We should examine it."

"Exactly."

Marquis Martin walked up to the cracked slab. He approached within several hundred metres of it and said.

"Fay, have the special guards be in a circular formation as we enter the slab. There is no guarantee what is on the inside. In addition, have the engineers on standby to keep watch for the Nakuma. Prepare to enter."

"Marquis-nim, isn't it better for you to wait on the side?"

"Don't joke around."

Marquis Martin looked at Fay and laughed.

“I was once an extraordinary warrior. I wasn’t afraid of danger a long time ago. I can’t just stand to the side and let you go alone!”

“...You should be aware of your status.”

Fay said with a sigh.

Fay was truly having a difficult time. Fay felt Ark’s gaze on him and turned his head towards the special guards.

“Let’s go!”

“Report on the situation!”

“We have searched from quadrants 40 to 376 and have failed to find the wreckage of the Noblesse. We also haven’t received the emergency signal.”

“Dammit!”

Weston cursed harshly and struck the dashboard.

As of today, 376 speedboats had expanded the range of the search but couldn’t find any traces of Marquis Martin or the Noblesse.

Weston’s heart felt agonized whenever he heard such reports.

‘How can the search find no traces? What happened to the Noblesse? Marquis Martin-nim? Is he really alive? No, even if he survived.....’

It was the most anxious time.

Even if Marquis Martin escaped unharmed from the Noblesse and was waiting somewhere, there should at least be an emergency signal. But the emergency food supply was only enough to last 3 days. In other words, Marquis Martin could hold on for 3 days.

And now Marquis Martin was missing for 3 days. In outer space, it was hard to find more food. After a few days, Marquis Martin’s body would be dead.

The unknown death of the highest ranking official in the Galactic Federation’s military. The upheaval caused by this incident couldn’t even be imagined.

‘If Marquis Martin-nim is what I think....what about his position? A war might occur! It would be a war of a different dimension! If we’re lucky, the Rama and Aschulat might not get involved and it would just be a civil war between factions!’

This was the worst situation for Weston. There was only one way to prevent this situation!

“Spread the word to each squadron leader. Expand the search range by 0.5 light years.”

“But 0.5 light years is the boundary of the space frontier.”

“It doesn’t matter!”

Weston shouted in a harsh voice.

“Now isn’t the time to be a coward! If Marquis Martin can’t be found then there is no guarantee what will happen. There is no time for a break. Pass the instructions onto the squadrons!”

“Earl-nim!”

A communications soldier turned his head and shouted.

“There is a communication signal not far from here. It wants direct contact.”

“Who is responsible for sending the communications?”

“The identification signal of a member of the Galactic....”

“Noisy.”

Marquis Martin said as he looked around.

It felt like his ears were continuously being battered by the sound of the sandstorm. However, the noise was cut off as soon as they entered the slab. And there was a heavy static.

Marquis Martin wasn't calling the team members noisy. He didn't know what sound he was hearing. It was an unknown feeling that pricked his skin!

“.....Creepy.”

Fay was unable to hide his tension and swallowed.

“This is clearly something below.”

However, Marquis Martin's face was filled with vigour.

“Special guards, continue paying attention. Firearms shooting mode. Organize into 5 teams of 2 on the left, right, front and back sides. Be ready to respond to attacks from any direction. Releasing your tension is the most dangerous act.”

“Marquis-nim, it is impossible for a person to relax under these circumstances.”

“You don't seem to be showing any tension.”

Marquis Martin was smiling happily. Although this planet showed Marquis Martin's abilities, it was still better to station guards on the boundaries. He was a VVIP. It would be difficult if he died in a place like this.

“I will take the lead.”

“I will yield the position.”

Marquis Martin stepped back without any hesitation. Ark was the only one with the power to see invisible things in the party. Therefore it would be best

for Ark to take the lead. Marquis Martin understood the situation and acted appropriately.

And Fay was next to Ark.

“I can’t leave you alone. This was my original position. I don’t know what power you have to see invisible things but I can’t just blindly trust you.”

He said it in a brusque tone but he was still willing to help. Anyway, Ark and the 40 individuals headed down after entering the slab.

The footholds formed a spiral shape. At first, it was a relatively small circular motion but eventually the rotation became hundreds of metres. They travelled a few laps before starting to narrow again. It was a huge underground space that had a sphere shape. And after 30 minutes.

“Is this the bottom?”

Finally their feet landed on a flat space. Ark activated the Hajaska rune but there was nothing in the space. But he felt an eerie sensation the moment he stepped foot inside the slab. Once he stepped foot on the flat ground, it felt like he was being bogged down.

Energy was spurting from the centre of the space. There was a hole hundreds of metres wide.

“Now, shall we see if there are any monsters hiding?”

Pajik, syu syu syu!

Marquis Martin lit up a flare.

And he threw the blue light into the hole. The flare then seemed to be stopped by something. Marquis Martin frowned and muttered.

“There seems to be something there.”

“.....What is it?”

Ark asked with a confused voice.

Marquis Martin, Fay and the crew members saw the flare stop halfway but Ark was different. A red slime was wriggling in the darkness. And the flare was split from side to side by the slime.

The thing that was revealed....

“Did you spot something?”

“.....An eye.”

“What?”

“...Eye! An eye! An eye of an immense size!”

Ark shouted with a stiff expression.

That’s right. A huge eye had surfaced from the hole. Thick threads covered the hole like spider webs while the eye looked up at Ark’s companions. Ark stared blankly at the shocking sight.

Suddenly someone yanked his collar.

Hwiiii! Pepepeng!

There was a roar as something was thrown up from the hole and hit the ceiling. Ark turned around with a confused expression to see Fay shouting.

“Stupid bastard! What are you doing? Didn’t I tell you? You shouldn’t be careless even if you are the only one who can see it!”

“W-what was that?”

“I don’t know! But.....”

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

The whole underground unit started shaking. And the next moment, something huge popped up from the hole. Mechanical parts dozens of metres in size were thrown up like a volcano exploded.

But those were merely debris. A huge object started rising from the hold behind it. It was a spaceship emitting light with an image of a blue planet on it. Marquis Martin's face stiffened as he saw it rising.

"G-Galactic Federation mark?"

"Oh my god! That....ship?"

"Noblesse! There's no doubt about it! That ship is the Noblesse!"

The ship that rose from the hole was unexpectedly Marquis Martin's cruiser, the Noblesse! A portion of it was torn so the Noblesse seemed like a ghost ship.

-The titan class monster 'Eisyeon Nakuma' has emerged!

At the same time, a red warning message flashed in front of them.

Space 8: Eisyeron Nakuma

SPACE 8. Eisyeron Nakuma

A giant ship was floating in the air.

The armour was torn, revealing the interior and some of the frames were sticking out. Just like a person was torn of their flesh to reveal the bone, the floating Noblesse was just like a ghost ship.

Woong woong woong, woong woong woong woong!

The crew stared at it with bemused eyes.

The turrets of the Noblesse were turned in the direction of the crew members.

The cruiser was one grade higher than the battleships Ark and Hawk used. Furthermore, it was the Marquis's private ship. The performance of everything from the armour to the turrets was superior. And the firearms were concentrated on them. More than half of them had fallen off but there were still 4 turrets aimed at the members.

Shells were simultaneously fired from the turrets.

"Dammit! A bombardment! Avoid it!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Fay shouted at the same time that a roar shook the space.

The crew scattered all over the place like a frightened swarm of fish. And a huge hole was created on the spot the shells hit.

Truly overwhelming firepower!

“How did this....?”

“No way! The Noblesse....!”

The crew burst out at the unimaginable scene.

It was hard to believe but a Nakuma was floating in front of them. The fact that the crew they had ridden on became a Nakuma was a huge shock. No matter what type of warriors they were, it was a shocking situation that caused them to lose their composure. The members never even thought of fighting back.

“These gutless people!”

Then Marquis Martin shouted.

“This might’ve been my ship but now it is a Nakuma! Are you ashamed to damage the spaceship of a marquis? Okay! It is already a piece of junk! I will dismantle this piece of junk with my own hands and sell it!”

Anyway....

It wasn’t a proper ambassador anymore....

“Yes, the Noblesse is now no different from scrap metal!”

“No, it isn’t the Noblesse! The opponent is just a hunk of scrap metal!”

The commander of a unit was important in protecting their lives.

Unless they lost their limbs, the members would naturally follow the commands. It was an absurd situation but Marquis Martin’s words lifted the shock from the heads of the crew members.

Marquis Martin was that type of commander.

“Wild Arm!”

Marquis Martin equipped the mechanical arms and shouted.

“Special guards, I handpicked you so don’t make me think it is a mistake! This is stronger than other spaceships! But the Noblesse was stronger due to us! The outstanding power of its captain and crew! Isn’t that right?”

“Ohhhhhh!”

“We know! The Noblesse isn’t mere chunks of iron! We are the strength of the Noblesse! The Noblesse isn’t a machine! That is just an empty shell!”

“All crew members, prepare for the final battle! Armour armament!”

A metal capsule soared over the members’ heads at Fay’s words. When S-20 has been attacked by chaotic people, Ark received the help of Marquis Martin’s battleship and guards to destroy the enemy.

The soldiers accompanying Marquis Martin at that time was different but they were still part of the special guards. And all of the special guards equipped their battle suits.

Tong! Tong! Tong! Tong!

The capsules rotated and turned into armour. And it emitted steam before wrapping around the soldiers’ bodies. Steam rose as 40 special guards changed into armoured warriors!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Then another hail of ammunition came from the Noblesse. But the situation was different from before.

“Defense!”

The battle suits of the special guards differed slightly in appearance. The armoured warriors moved according to Fay’s instructions. A few lasers stretched out and exploded against the shells in the air.

The ranger type battle suits had small GEMs mounted on them! A defense

system that intercepted the enemy shells or missiles. 6 GEMs intercepted a considerable number of shells. However, the four GEM turrets mounted on the battle suit could only intercepted a small amount of shells.

The shells that weren't intercepted flew through the flames towards the group. However, the special guards were a well-organized force!

"Spread the shields!"

10 crew members jumped out at the command. The armoured warriors had thick coils attached to both arms. They linked arms and the coils sparked to form a connected, giant shield.

A multi-shield deployment by defender type armoured warriors! Of course, Marquis Martin and Ark weren't just watching.

"Inspire!"

Marquis Martin cried out and punched wildly. At that moment, blue light emerged from his mechanical arms and wrapped around the special guards.

-Marquis Martin has activated 'Inspire.'

An outstanding commander can raise the morale of their soldiers. Inspire uses these attributes to increase the power of the soldiers for a certain period of time. However, the increase in ability of the soldiers will be affected by the leadership value of the commander.

<Marquis Martin's leadership value of 2,500: All

stats will increase by 30%, injuries sustained in combat will recover 50% faster.>

Marquis Martin's special skill, Inspire!

Combined with the increase in ability from the battle suit, this was an estimated rise of 60%. Their injury recovery rate also rose. It was possible to recover health even during battle.

It was an enormous buff effect. This was due to the fact that the commander's leadership was 2,500. Something that might seem rustic next to that....

"Rune Carving, Kuon!"

-Rune Carving: Kuon has been used.

<All allies within 100 metres will have their health and defense increased by 20% for 30 minutes.>

Ark's Kuon rune buff!

Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng!

The GEM intercepted the shells being poured out. Fire and smoke poured from the shells. And those that hit the blue shield instantly detonated!

"...We managed to stop it."

Marquis Martin smiled and said.

The performance wasn't very different from the previous fights against the

Nakuma. Of course, the performance of the machines would drop after being absorbed by the Nakuma but it was only by 20%. In other words, any level 100 weapons mounted would only have the firepower of a level 80 weapon.

And now the Nakuma had absorbed the cruiser. It meant the turrets could exert 80% of its original power. It was the reason why the members previously lost their will to fight. The cruiser was equipped with turrets. Even if it was only at 80%, ordinary soldiers weren't a match for it.

Nevertheless, they still had to take action. Battle suit+ unit organization+ GEM+ Kuon....it was possible for them to fend off the shells of the Noblesse.

'We blocked it! The bombardment from the Noblesse!'

'We can win!'

'As long as I'm with Marquis Martin!'

Ark could feel a change in the eyes of the crew members. Fay didn't miss this timing.

"Marquis-nim's words have been proven! The Noblesse was the most powerful battleship created so far because there was the ultimate crew aboard! But now the Noblesse is moving due to a Nakuma! The Noblesse is only a space monster in this form! Special guards! Let it know this fact! Shoulder launchers!"

The launchers emerged from Fay's shoulder blades. Launchers were mounted on the heavy artillery type battle suits. The battle suit clad members aimed the launchers towards the Noblesse.

"Smash them all!"

Tutung! Tutung! Tutung! Tutung!

At the same time, dozens of shells poured out! That wasn't all. The crew wearing assault type battle suits fired the machine guns while others threw

bombs.

The Noblesse shook as explosions covered the area. Of course, the Noblesse wasn't acting gently. It tirelessly alternated between its 4 turrets. The crew members standing next to each other had to yell to be heard over the gunfire.

Blue and red colours spread through the darkness that it was hard for the crew members to even see. However, the soldiers were members of the special guards! They moved in an orderly fashion to properly corner the Noblesse.

This lasted for a few minutes.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Pepeng!

There was a chain of explosions and smoke soared. The firepower that focused on only one turret!

'That's it! It looks good!'

Ark clenched his fists.

One of the turrets were destroyed. That alone reduced the firepower of the Noblesse by a quarter. And now there were only 3 turrets remaining.

They were initially frightened but now they could push the Noblesse to an easy victory!

However, Ark's weapon was a lightsaber. His secondary weapon was the Fire Eagle but it was only a level 65 weapon. There was no reason to use it against the Nakuma. It was unlikely for the level 65 Fire Eagle to deal high damage to the mechanical creature. Furthermore, the shotgun had a short range.

Thanks to the Noblesse floating in the air, Ark didn't have any ranged firepower to attack it. He just used the Kuon rune and occasionally used Sword Defense to block shells.

But such things didn't matter. He was in party with the special guards so there

was no need to worry about the experience. It was the same with the loot. There was no reason to fret about not playing an active role.

No, he didn't need to fight in order to defeat it!

"Okay! It is just starting now!"

"But be vigilant!"

"Don't take a rest and concentrate on smashing it!"

A turret was destroyed so the attacks became more lively.

But Ark, Marquis Martin, Fay and the crew members didn't expect the situation that unfolded next. The moment the crew's morale rose and they were about to start bombing again!

Wing wing wing wing, wing wing wing wing....wiiiiing!

The Noblesse started rotating like a spin top. The rotation acceleration enough that it just looked like a shapeless black mass! At the same time, a vortex occurred with the Noblesse in the centre.

"Ugh! W-what?"

"It is a tremendous wind pressure! I can't hold my posture!"

The crew members winced as they were pushed by the wind. It was hard for them to maintain their balance in order to fire. Needless to say, it was a serious penalty! But the real serious problem was something separate.

"I can't grasp the target!"

The turrets were rotating at such a tremendous rate that they were invisible. But despite the fact that it wasn't visible, the turrets clearly existed.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Shells flew from the rotating Noblesse.

The shells flew in every direction. The crew members that were still caught in the storm of wind collapsed. The rangers were unable to properly intercept the shells with the GEM and gaps occurred in the shield.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The shells that exploded inside the formation! The shells weren't aimed properly but the situation was deteriorating rapidly. The crew caught in the explosion instantly collapsed. They couldn't respond and were further injured in the 2nd and 3rd bombardment. That wasn't the Nakuma's only attack.

Syu syu syu syu! Syu syu syu syu!

The bottom half of the Noblesse opened and dozens of tentacles stretched out. They were tentacles entwined with screws, nuts and small machine parts!

"W-what is going on?"

"Dammit! Defenders, stop it!"

The defenders yelled out with bewilderment. And cracks spread on the shield as the tentacles struck against it. It was vulnerable due to the explosion of the shells so the damage from the direct hit was multiplied several times. In other words, it was difficult to fend off the tentacles with the shield!

"Ugh! It is impossible!"

"Gun! Intercept the tentacles with the Armour Piercing Bullet!"

Some members of the crew fired their machine guns at Fay's command. However, it was difficult to aim at the centre of the storm. It also wasn't easy with the fast moving tentacles. Furthermore, the thick tentacles didn't break with one or two hits.

Tu tu tu tu! Kwang! Kwang! Kwang! Kwang! Kwang!

The crew fired crazily at the tentacles. The Noblesse also didn't stop the

rotating bombardment. Flames soared, stones were finely crushed, the storm obstructed the view and the tentacles struck like a whip at the crew members.

It was chaos!

‘Damn! It was too easy!’

He had dismissed the opponent known as the Eisyen Nakuma! A titan class boss monster wouldn’t be too mediocre in battle. Even so, he never imagined that the battle would reverse so quickly.

But he couldn’t be discouraged. He wouldn’t give up when facing the Nakuma.

Syu syu syu syu!

“Get lost! Sonic Sword!”

Ark wielded the Equalizer against the tentacles.

And the moment the tentacles flinched back, he used Swamp Walking to skim down the slippery tentacles with his sword. Sparks flew upwards as the white light struck the tentacles and the metal parts flew off.

But that only lasted for a brief moment. The metal parts once again attached to the tentacles like there was a magnet.

“Dammit! Is this a joke?”

Occasionally he would face this type of Nakuma. When parts of the body was destroyed, it would absorb things to maintain the shape. The way to handle this type of Nakuma was to disassemble it faster than it could recover.

However, now the body of the Nakuma was the Noblesse! It was impossible!

‘.....No way!’

“Cough!”

Ark internally gave a cry of despair. There were cries of distress as the crew members ran past him. The tentacles followed like they were chasing. And the tip was sharp like a drill!

“Back away! Piercing!”

Ark turned and stretched out the Equalizer. At the same time, he turned into a ray of light and collided with the tentacles.

“Ah, Ark-nim!”

“Please join the formation! Over here....”

Another tentacle flew towards Ark. He hastily lifted his sword and was pushed back by a heavy blow.

At this point, Ark just wanted to get out of the way of the blow. But his lightsaber had been grabbed by a small mechanical hand attached to the tentacles.

Teong!

Thanks to that, the collision pushed him more than 20 metres into a wall! His breath got stuck in his throat from the pressure of blocking the tentacles. The mechanical arms on the tentacle grabbed him. Ark twisted his body, held out his left arm and shouted.

“Baius Shield! Summon Golem!”

—*Master! You!*

Bao glared at Ark. It still had emotions from when Ark kicked it on the stony mountain. However, there was no time for Bao to complain.

“Shut up! Blast!”

—*Ooh! T-this bastard!*

Ark forcefully invoked the skill! Bao squatted down and awls emerged from his head. At the same moment, the arms holding Ark and the lightsaber weakened. And when he got away from the tentacles.

“Bao, from now on....”

–Ugh! Kuaaaa! Keuak! Ahhh!

Bao suddenly grabbed his head and rolled across the floor. Ark finally noticed something about Bao’s state. Usually his head would return to its original state after firing the awls. But Bao’s head was still in a sharp state. It wasn’t just that.

–Ah....iyah....gigigi...gugugu...

Bao gave a bizarre moan as a black spider threads emerged from the Noblesse, Nakuma, and entered him. Ark didn’t know what was going on.

But!

‘It is clear that something good isn’t happening!’

“Bao, come back!”

Ark hurriedly turned Bao into a shield. However, sparks flew up and a red message flashed as the golem tried to return to the bracelet state.

-Summoning release of the Baius Golem has failed!

An unknown curse has adversely affected the spiritual connection between the shield and the golem.

If left untreated for a long time, the mysterious ability of the Baius Shield may disappear.

A swift response was required! It was ridiculous that the mysterious ability of the Baius Shield would disappear. Didn't that mean Bao might vanish?

"That is ridiculous...."

A scream emerged from Ark's mouth.

Bao might be arrogant but Ark wasn't indifferent to him! Sometimes he felt like a parent! He had raised the golem to level 50. That golem would disappear? It was unacceptable.

But it was a situation where he couldn't even release the summoning!

'There must be another way! I need to deal with this as swiftly as possible.....'

Ark lifted his head. And once again checked the message.

Currently Bao was suffering from an unknown curse. He didn't know why there was a curse out of nowhere. And Ark had no way to turn off the curse.

"Force Explosion!"

Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng!

Ark caused a series of chain explosions that extended an intangible aura!

- 'Force Explosion' has been used!

The power of darkness has distorted and the force in the area has stabilized.

<Duration: 3 minutes>

Force Explosion was a skill he received back on Muratio Star. The effect distorted the dark space and returned it to its original state. In other words, it was a debuff to get rid of a curse.

‘This is it!’

Ark hurriedly looked down at Bao.

–Ohh...Ohh....

Bao was still moaning with agony. But the black cobweb like shapes over his body hadn’t come back. Force Explosion had purified the curse on him.

“Come back! Summon release!”

Ark hurriedly reverted Bao back to the shield form. Something strange then caught his eyes. Ark’s periphery became oddly brighter. It wasn’t just that. The mechanical parts near him....

“Oh my god! Perhaps this is?”

Then something popped into Ark’s head. He paused for a moment before turning and running away from the place where the Noblesse and tentacles were.

“What? That guy?”

Dozens of metres away from that place.

Fay was firing his heavy artillery towards the tentacles. Fay didn’t know who it was at first but confirmed it was Ark with his infrared scope.

“He is running away....”

Syu syu syu! Pepeng!

The tentacles flew towards him.

Fay quickly turned his body and pulled the trigger. The tentacles faltered but struck against Fay to throw him against the wall several metres up. He gave out a cry of shock and blood filled his mouth.

“Cough! Dammit, making a mistake like this....”

Fay looked around with lips stained with blood. The height meant he could guess the number of tentacles and the situation was more serious than he thought.

No, it had to be serious. The Noblesse was still rotating so the crew couldn't properly attack it. They couldn't block the indiscriminate bombing and tentacles.

The strength of an organization or military power depended on the battle formation. It would be difficult if they couldn't maintain their battle formation. No matter how effectively Marquis Martin destroyed the tentacles with Wild Arms, he was only one person. It was close to impossible for the 40 crew members to overturn the situation.

The special guards would be wiped out!

“Yes, you can run away. I won't blame you. No, it is a good decision. You are still young so you don't need to sacrifice your lives in this battle. Don't die trying to be a hero. If you run away then you will get the title of survivor.”

Fay said with a bloody smile. After a while, he clenched his teeth and continued.

“But I won't run away! I am the captain of the special guards! Even if I have to go to hell with Marquis-nim! That is the meaning of my existence!”

Fay struck a dagger into the tentacle around his ankle.

And there was the sound of mechanical parts cracking as the tentacles

weakened. Fay then jumped down. It was only a fall of a few metres but he could feel the pain through his whole body.

However, Fay just bit his lip.

“I will show the character of the captain of the special guards!”

Fay held grenades in both hands. And he prepared to pull out the safety pins as he rushed towards the Noblesse. He was already in a critical condition. He was prepared to die to be a great help in the battle. Fay selected this approach! He desperately threw his body at the enemy!

“Come! Space monster! This is Fay’s last....”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

And when he was rushing towards the Noblesse. There was suddenly a loud scream above his head? A shout? Something like that had appeared. Fay reflexively lifted his head with confusion.

The sight of someone dropping down on the spinning Noblesse caught his eyes. The warrior wrapped in a Rama battle suit was surprisingly....

“....Ark?”

“Ikyullos?”

—Yes.

“That....”

Weston couldn’t conceal his confusion.

A female military officer with silky, black hair was on the screen in front of him. The communication sent to Weston a while ago was from Irina, a member of the Galactic Federation’s internal affairs.

It was a state of emergency so Weston had intended to ignore the communication. However, he couldn't ignore it. The message to Weston stated that she knew the whereabouts of Marquis Martin.

—Earl-nim should know about the incident where Ikyullos suddenly disappeared. Marquis Martin headed there a while ago to investigate the event with Ark-nim and were sunk by an unidentified being. And now they are looking for a way to escape from the planet Ikyullos.

This was the information that Irina knew. But Weston couldn't easily accept it.

“The tracks don't make sense! Just like your words, Ikyullos has disappeared. How could the Noblesse be hit and Marquis-nim land on a lost planet?”

—I don't know a lot about this situation.

“You don't know a lot? Yet you expect me to believe you?”

—But it is true.

“The evidence?”

—Nothing. I can only say that Ark-nim is with Marquis Martin and we have an unusual power to communicate no matter how far apart we are.

Irina replied with a decisive expression. A special power to know each other's situation no matter how far apart they were! This could be called love telepathy....

In reality it was just a mobile phone.

Ark had asked for Irina's help in reality while he was on Ikyullos. There was no way to confirm the situation after Ark landed on Ikyullos. Irina stopped her official quest and moved to Ikyullos. She searched for the coordinates of the Noblesse and couldn't discover anything. Ark could become sure that Ikyullos was still in a missing state. And needless to say, Irina could grasp the situation

because of Ark.

However, she couldn't explain about phones to a NPC. Irina had to answer something unreasonable like love telepathy.

Weston had a depressed expression. But his worries didn't last long.

"As a soldier of the Galactic Federation, you must realize the seriousness of the situation. Are you aware of the punishment you will receive for incorrect information?"

—Of course.

"Okay. Then tell me. What do you want from me?"

—Currently Ark and Marquis Martin-nim are almost at the core of the reason why Ikyullos disappeared. And if the two solve the situation, Ikyullos is likely to appear in the next few hours. Once that happens, you can immediately rescue them.

"Ikyullos will appear...."

Weston looked at Irina with sharp eyes.

"Even if what you say is true, you can't prove that Ikyullos will appear. Marquis-nim or the pioneer Ark might fail. Then you will be guilty of impeding the search and will be court-martialled. Are you sure you don't want to withdraw your claim?"

—Yes.

"What is the reason for your confidence?"

—The person with Marquis-nim is Ark-nim.

Irina replied with a decisive expression. Weston gazed at Irina with an angry expression before shouting while turning his body.

“Stop the search operation and move the fleet to Ikyullos!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

-89 damage!

-35 damage!

-58 damage.....

The Noblesse was rotating furiously in the centre of the underground space. Ark equipped the battle suit and covered his body with the Mind Shield before rushing in. Despite the battle suit, he still suffered tremendous damage from the Noblesse.

The Noblesse was a combination of shattered wreckage. It had the same effect as a rotating iron grinder. The reason why Ark’s body was in such a place....

“Force Explosion!”

Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng!

There were loud explosions and an intangible aura spread. The rotating Noblesse decomposed in several areas and small fragments flew out. And it spread in every direction, including hitting against the wall.

....This is it!

He had realized it when Bao was in a life or death situation. Ark witnessed an unexpected scene when using Force Explosion. The area affected by Force Explosion because brighter.

The mechanical parts of the tentacles in the range also naturally decomposed. Shortly after Ark activated the skill, there was a pile of machines on the floor. Then an ‘!’ popped into Ark’s head.

‘Force Explosion is a skill that counteracts the power of darkness. The entire area affected by Force Explosion is different from the others so....’

It meant the space itself was covered with the powers of darkness! Ark started to think of numerous things in his head. Ikyullos was covered with a black sunspot. And this was the centre of the sunspot. There was no doubt that this was the cause of all the events.

‘I didn’t know it until now but that black shape is the body of the Nakuma. It probably combined with mechanical parts to form the entity known as the Nakuma! And every Nakuma the special guards defeated had flown here. Maybe they combined together to form the Eisyoon Nakuma. No, the Nakuma are probably small fragments of this being!’

This was the conclusion that Ark came to. The important point was that the black spirit needed to combine with the mechanical parts to form the Nakuma.

‘Yes, I clearly felt a strange aura when coming down here. It was like stepping into a quagmire. But I didn’t see anything even with the Hajaska rune. Now I know why. I did see it. I just didn’t notice. The moment I came down here, I was already caught in the Nakuma’s black body!’

That was the only reason Ark could think of to explain it.

‘Something was strange. I can’t see the health of the Eisyoon Nakuma. No wonder why. I would be able to see the health gauge of a monster when fighting its body. Yes, this is the body of the Eisyoon Nakuma!’

The space itself was a curse made by the power of darkness, or the Eisyoon Nakuma itself. If Force Explosion could counteract the power of darkness then

the answer was simple.

Perhaps the Noblesse was moving with the power of darkness. Force Explosion could neutralize the power of darkness. Ark's certainty about the reason increased.

However, it was hard to access the Noblesse rotating in the air. Therefore he jumped towards the Noblesse before using Force Explosion.

This was the result. The Noblesse broke down and exploded. But the situation wasn't entirely cleaned up.

"P-pieces of the Noblesse is scattering!"

"But that...."

"Oh my god! That is the tentacle from the Noblesse!"

"The Noblesse wasn't controlling the tentacles?"

The crew burst out screaming as they stared with shocked eyes. Dozens of tentacles congregated in the area where the Noblesse disappeared. It might be due to Force Explosion neutralized the power of darkness but Marquis Martin, Fay and the crew members could now see the Nakuma.

Ark was standing on top of the bunch of tentacles.

Syu syu syu syu! Syu syu syu syu!

The Noblesse had disappeared and now only the tentacles remained. Ark struck the tentacles with his lightsaber and rolled across the floor.

'The power of darkness in this area has already been neutralized. But these bunch of tentacles are real. This is the main body of the Nakuma. There is also a chance that Force Explosion couldn't entirely neutralize all of the power of darkness. But the power of darkness has weakened!'

“Force Explosion!”

Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng! Pepepepeng!

The intangible aura spread out again. The energy touched the tentacles and they became tattered. He couldn't see the health but he was assured that there was damage. That wasn't all. The Equalizer could rip into the tentacles.

“Ark! Ark is fighting the body from above!”

“A-amazing! That is Ark!”

“Stupid fools! Where are you looking?”

The crew members heard a voice in their ear like a bomb while they were watching with admiration. The crew flinched and turned towards Fay who was shouting angrily.

“Are you guys just going to allow Ark to attack the Nakuma alone after he just took care of the Noblesse? Are you going to just sit back and watch?”

“Hah! T-that's right!”

“Attack! Cover Ark-nim!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepeng! Pepeng!

The crew recovered their souls and stopped watching. However.....

“T-that isn't right?”

The ammunition penetrated through the tentacles into the wall. The power of darkness was neutralized but the its property was still unchanged. It was intangible.

Now the situation depended on Ark. Ark stood on the bunch of tentacles. However, it felt more like he was standing on a swamp.

It was a buoyant surface. Ark was able to move along the tentacles thanks to

Swamp Walking! He dispersed his weight and glided across as he fought the tentacles. But there was no way he could attack all the tentacles.

In fact, the Noblesse had fought the tentacles before sinking. And now Ark was striking the tentacles with a sword. The similarities between these two attacks....

“Energy shot!”

Marquis Martin shouted.

“Ark’s ray is managing to hit the back substance. That means that attacks with that property will succeed! Everybody switch to energy bullets! Haaayaahh! Space Jump!”

Marquis Martin yelled and ran past the crew. And he leapt 20 metres before landing on top of the tentacles like Ark. The reason he jumped up to Ark.....

“Dual Sword!”

Blue lightsabers emerged from the Wild Arms on both of Marquis Martin’s arms. It was a mechanical arm that had various bullets and lightsabers fitted in it. He had seen it a few times but it was still a very desirable equipment!

“Ark, I’ll help you!”

“Hurry before he starts struggling!”

“Puhahahat! Who are you talking about? I fought many air battles while on active duty. Fighting on special terrains is my specialty! Come, take this you bastard worm! Cross Sword!”

Marquis Martin ran while wielding his two lightsabers. Marquis Martin just a similar motion to Swamp Walking as he moved across the tentacle without hesitation. Each time he formed a cross shape, a part of the tentacle would be cut off. He had higher damage than Ark.

“Force Explosion!”

However, he was still Ark. Ark damaged a whole bunch of tentacles at once with Force Explosion!

“We are also here!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepeng! Pepeng!

The special guards switched to energy bullets and fired! Ark, Marquis Martin, Fay and 20 members of the special guards (15 had been killed) attacked and shredded the bunch of tentacles.

But this was the Eisyen Nakuma. The tentacles dealt steady damage to Ark and the others. It was what made Ark uneasy.

‘Now the battle is in our favour. But we can’t ignore the harm on our side. Besides, I can’t determine its health. Since I am unable to determine the health, there is no telling how long it will last. So I need to do critical hits!’

Then his eyes lit up! There was no need to worry about this. He had spotted the eyes that were a weak point!

‘The game is about to end!’

Wiing! Wiing! Wiiing! Wuuong!

Ark brandished the Equalizer towards the tentacles. And the tentacles moved to reveal a huge eye and its stalks. The tentacles started attacking wildly the moment Ark saw the eyes.

“Ha! You don’t like me poking this?”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

He cut off three or four tentacle stems!

Ark fell through a hole. Large machine parts were lodged in the wall of the

hole he fell into.

“How do you like my ultimate weapon? Solid Armour!”

-Lock on!

-Lock on!

-Lock on!

-Lock on...

The message rose up at the same time the Fire Avarice was mounted!

“Carpet bombing!”

In the next moment, the Fire Avarice on his shoulders opened and it fired. And the missiles headed towards the targets!

Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng! Pepeng!

An explosion occurred in the hole. Ark hurriedly sliced apart dozens of tentacles in order to escape the flames. No, the moment he was about to break through!

“Equalizer! Berserker activate! Piercing!”

Berserker that increased the effectiveness of attack skills by 50%! Piercing seemed to explode through the black shape! At the same time, Ark’s body flashed between the tentacles. And the next moment!

Jjajjajjang!

There was ringing sound as the white ray of the Equalizer pierced into the

pupil.

-Kuaaaaaack!

At the same time, there was a crack in the space as the eyes fluctuated. The Eiseon Nakuma and Nakuma in the entire area was screaming in pain.

But Ark ignored them. The enemy was showing a weakness!

“Khafra Fencing 3rd style! Galaxy Sword! Time!”

Ark struck the eyes again with Galaxy Sword. The eyes swelled up like a balloon. And the moment it reaches its limit!

Snap! Snap! Snap! Pepepeng!

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen.....

The messages continuously popped up! The Eiseon Nakuma was finally defeated.

And the body that Ark fell into disappeared. He couldn't relax after receiving the level up messages. But Ark had already predicted this situation.

“Fly away, Super Board!”

Ark pulled out his air board. And he rode the thermals created by the explosion. He quickly passed through the disappearing tentacles and grabbed Marquis Martin. And shiny objects scattered everywhere!

Kung! Kung! Kung! Degul degul.

There was a sound as he approached the ground. Ark jumped to one side and rolled.

He looted the shiny objects that fell from the tentacles! He monopolized all the loot from the Nakuma but the special guards were unlikely to give up items from a boss monster. He should pick it up while the crew were distracted.

And the first big catch!

-Mysterious Shaking Cloak (???)

Item Type: Cloak Wearer Restriction: Level 150

Defense: 30 Durability: 60/100

A mysterious cloak made from a transparent material that flutters like a ghost. The fibres are made from an unknown material. It is natural. It was never reported. So the only way to determine it is through a direct analysis.

※ Item effect is still undisclosed.

<Item Analysis Lv. 3 required>

The cloak had a vaguely slimy texture.

Anyway, it was an unidentified item. In addition, the special guards were still distracted. And greed dripped from his eyes as he noticed several small items nearby.

-Soul Stone (???)

Item Type: Growth

A mysterious ore that shimmers in transparent glass. A skilled pioneer can feel the hidden power. However, the exact identity of that power can't be determined. The identity of the ore can be determined through analysis with state of the art equipment.

※ Item effect is still undisclosed.

<Item Analysis Lv. 4 required>

‘Soul Stone?’

It was the name of the ore.

It was a little disappointing that a titan class boss monster only dropped a small amount of items but the stone required an analysis skill level of 4. This was higher than the cloak! At least it wasn't a common ore.

Naturally he put it away before it caught the eyes of other people.

“Ark-nim!”

The crew members then approached.

“This...don't we need an explanation?”

Ark looked at them with uncomfortable eyes. He thought they might've witnessed the moment Ark found the loot. However, the crew members maintained a little distance and scanned Ark up and down.

“Is that the battle suit of the Rama?”

“Why does Ark-nim have the Rama....”

Ark realized that he was still wearing the Hyper Drone. In fact, Ark hadn't worn the battle suit earlier in order to avoid this question.

He was already Hoksullo's hyung-nim but this was the first time the crew members saw Ark wear the battle suit.

Furthermore, they were combatants not engineers like Hoksullo.

They had fought on the battlefield against the Rama.

They couldn't just accept this situation.

“That.....”

Thanks to that, Ark was at a loss for words.

Then Fay shouted at the crew members.

“You idiots, what is this all about? Don't you know why you still have your lives? Ark risked his life to change the battle situation! You guys are still breathing because of Ark! Yet you are doubting your saviour just because Ark is wearing the battle suit of the enemy?”

“Huh? No, that's not it but....”

“Fay's words are true.”

Marquis Martin said from behind.

“Ark is a hero of the Galactic Federation and a pioneer. He has travelled around the universe. Isn't that a sufficient explanation? And now isn't the time to discuss such a trivial matter. My Nymphe was just crying out.”

Marquis Martin said as he extended his Nymphe.

–Marquis-nim, jijiji....emergency....soon....jijiji....hurry....

Hoksullo's voice mixed with static could be heard from the Nymphe. There was something happening to the engineers waiting outside.

"Special guards, we are going up!"

Fay shouted and headed up without delay. Marquis Martin, Ark and the 20 crew members followed behind him.

"W-what? This is really....."

Ark glanced around with surprised eyes. The giant sandstorm that had been occurring since the emergency pods landed had finally stopped. And the landscape revealed was truly spectacular!

A mysterious light shone over the blue and brown mixed sand and glass. But now wasn't the time to be impressed by the view. The mysterious light revealed a huge number of Nakuma approaching. The Nakuma herd Ark had led away was finally returning.

"We took too much time."

"It is tough to deal with those numbers."

"The situation on this planet seems to already been resolved so there is no reason to stay here."

The black curtain above their head had disappeared and a white sky was revealed. This was evidence that Ikyullos had returned to its original state after the Eisyen Nakuma was defeated. If so, that meant they could communicate with the outside world!

"There is no reason to fight them. The Galactic Federation is likely searching near this planet. We should leave this place and send a distress signal to the search party."

“There is no need to do that.”

Ark said as he looked up at the sky. Marquis Martin, Fay and the crew members had ‘?’ as they lifted their heads along with Ark. Dozens of lights were approaching in the sky at a great speed.

And the next moment!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a series of explosions and flames engulfed the Nakuma. And hundreds of spaceships appeared. The sky was covered with a massive amount of spaceships with the mark of the Galactic Federation on them!

And the person who got off a ship....

“Ark-nim!”

....Irina.

Space 9: No Time for a Break

SPACE 9. No Time for a Break!

“Hrmm.....”

“Heh, what do you think?”

“There is definitely an impact.”

The main MC in charge of the Game Scoop news, Lee Ji-un nodded. And the elated man standing in front of him was the journalist called Sorin in Galaxian.

“It isn’t only an impact! Look at this! An entire planet disappeared then reappeared! In addition, all the spaceships that are gathered around the planet! The Galactic Federation spaceships that are only mobilized in wartime! There are hundreds of speedboats! This isn’t normal!”

Sorin excitedly pointed at the monitor. His USB was plugged into the monitor where an amazing scene was unfolding.

Hundreds of spaceships and speedboats were floating in outer space. It was just spectacular. But in the next moment, a hazy sphere started to emerge in front of where the spaceships were gathered. As it became more clear and crisp, it was surprisingly a planet! A planet had suddenly appeared.

“But there wasn’t any announcements from the Galactic Federation?”

“Yes, that is the key.”

Sorin replied while moving his fingers.

“I picked up suspicious movements from the Pentagon and traced the military operation to that area. It is dangerous to do practical training in that area

because private spaceships can enter. I also checked and there wasn't anything about military training. So I filmed this video with an optical telescope while hiding 8 light years away. As a journalist, the super telescope is perfect for me."

"Do you know this planet?"

Lee Ji-un asked Sorin.

"Of course. I retrieved the coordinates and it turned out to be the planet Ikyullos."

"Ikyullos? It makes sense since that is the original planet."

"Yes, it is more surprisingly that Ikyullos is the planet that the Emperor of the Galactic Federation recently gave to a user."

"A planet that is the territory of a user? Who?"

"It is Ark."

"Who? Ark? Ark....."

"Yes, the hero of Beltana. And he had the best achievements in the magic circle investigation not long ago. The compensation that Ark received at that time was Ikyullos. But then the planet seemed to have disappeared. And the area was declared a Galactic Federation military operation area. It isn't confirmed yet but the armed forces of Marquis Martin were on Ikyullos. Nevertheless, there were no announcements from the Galactic Federation. How is it? Can you smell a scoop?"

"...Certainly. It is a wonderful story."

Lee Ji-un nodded. However, he soon scratched his head with an awkward expression.

"But the problem is actually Ark."

“Why is that a problem? Ark. Whether or not he is the same Ark from New World, the name is still well known. Doesn’t the speculation about whether he is ‘that’ Ark or not a relevant topic?”

Of course it was a relevant topic. There was some suspicion about whether he was the Ark of New World. The smell of a big secret. It was likely that the Galactic Federation was hiding an incident related to Ark. However, there was a problem involved with covering news about Ark.

“PD-nim has already expressed interest in Ark. Like I said, he is a relevant topic. However, every formal request has been turned down.”

“Huh? Why?”

“I don’t know the answer.”

Lee Ji-un replied with an annoyed look.

“There are some users who dislike exposing themselves but Ark’s extent is like a deep sea. He refused to even mosaic his face for a brief interview with the details agreed on in advance. Even if Jung Hye-sun would directly interview him.”

“Jung Hye-sun ssi? Hye-sun ssi would interview him?”

“It was Hye-sun ssi’s direct request.”

“....Yet he still refused?”

Sorin muttered with an absurd expression.

Jung Hye-sun was a female celebrity whose stock price was rising these days. Any user would be dying to meet her. Yet he refused? Sorin was a journalist affiliated with Game Scoop but he hadn’t even properly greeted Jung Hye-sun yet.

But that was different.

‘There is something strange no matter how much he hates to reveal himself. And the man who was involved with suspicious activities on Beltana and Ikyullos....’

He sensed something as a journalist. There was something here! While Sorin was busy thinking.

“This might be an opportunity.”

Lee Ji-un said with a grin after thinking for a moment.

“Huh? What are you saying?”

“Is your telescope still on?”

“Yes....”

“We will surprise a grass snake. Stimulating an opponent might be bothersome but there is also something good about deliberately provoking an enemy.”

Sorin had ‘?’ pop into his head at Lee Ji-un’s words. What did his words mean? Sorin soon realized the meaning of Lee Ji-un’s words.

“The Galactic Federation is keeping the matter of planets disappearing a secret. I don’t know what they are trying to hide. We can only speculate about the reasons. Anyway, Ikyullos is Ark’s planet. What will happen if we reveal this?”

“....A dispute.”

“Then of course we will need to apologize for the situation.”

“....An interview.”

“That’s right.”

Lee Ji-un stood up.

“Write an article in an organized manner. I have to talk with the PD. The title of the article will organize this week’s Game Scoop News. We will broadcast your video after Ark contacts us.”

“Yes! I understand!”

At the same time, Sorin’s fingers danced on the keyboard.

-The mystery of the disappearing planet!

A planet that disappeared suddenly appeared again a few days ago!

There were suspicious movements in the Galactic Federation fleet before the planet appeared again!

And there was a private meeting between the Galactic Federation army, Ark and Marquis Martin.

Is the missing planet a natural phenomenon? An unknown space monster? Or maybe the Galactic Federation were secretly testing an experimental weapon? What is the Galactic Federation’s reason behind keeping silent?

A shocking video that will appear on the Game Scoop news!

Check out this week’s Game Scoop!

The truth is there....

....The truth was literally ‘out there.’

“So....”

Ark scratched his head.

“What is it? What happened on Ikyullos?”

“I don’t know yet.”

Marquis Martin shook his head.

“This incident still hasn’t been reported to the Galactic Federation. We’ve defeated a huge Nakuma. In fact, I’m not sure if it is even appropriate to categorize it as a Nakuma. But we have to try and reveal it. A clue might be obtained.”

“You mean the inscriptions on the slab?”

“Yes, a military investigation team will be dispatched to restore the inscription. It is still impossible to decipher the letters written on it but we might be able to find some clues. Therefore I have something to discuss with you. The investigation team wants a research centre dedicated to studying the inscription to be established on Ikyullos.”

“...Research centre?”

Ark has a worried expression on his face.

Once again, Ark was planning to develop Ikyullos. And he had already secured investment funds to develop it. But now there would be a military institute? Of course, Ark wanted to know more about the details.

It was obvious that Ikyullos had disappeared completely. He would be upset if something happened during its development. He would be screwed if it reverted back to the missing state. It wasn’t 100% certain that the Eiseyon Nakuma was the cause of the incident.

He couldn’t guarantee the same thing wouldn’t happen again. So Ark wanted some guarantee of Ikyullos’ safety. If he opposed the military’s research institute then there might be a setback in Ikyullos’ development.

Marquis Martin laughed and shook his head.

“That won’t happen. The nature of this event won’t be declared to the public.

But the controlled area will extend 10 kilometres around the inscription. You can take care of the other areas however you like. There will be no setback in the planet's development."

"Then it doesn't matter."

Ark quickly replied to Marquis Martin's words. He didn't care as long as there was no setback in the development.

Originally a planet belonged to the lord so the lord would have to take all responsibility. It meant that Ikyullos going missing was the lord's responsibility. In addition, Ikyullos was adjacent to the western border of the Galactic Federation where space pirates often frequented.

It would place a considerable burden on the owner. Of course, he could request the assistance of the Galactic Federation troops when attacked by enemy pirates. However, the lord would have to block the attack until the troops arrived. The lord would suffer damage in the meantime.

This was the reason why planets in the Galactic Federation required defenses. Especially if it was a planet on the border. Before starting the full scale development, Ark would need to invest in defense facilities.

However, it was a different story if there was a military research institute. It was a secret laboratory that would require defense facilities. Regular Galactic Federation troops would also be coming and going.

In other words, it was a type of Galactic Federation base. The reason to spend money on defenses would disappear. That wasn't the only benefit of the research institute. But it was still in the preparatory stages.

"Okay. You can proceed."

He nodded towards Marquis Martin who continued talking.

“The military will rush to build the research institute. Of course, the Star Gate is also part of that. As you know, originally the Star Gate on Ikyullos was only going to connect to S-20. But it will be a different story if there is a research institute. As well as S-20, it will also be connected to the major cities and 12 planets on the western border. It requires a large construction cost but I have an excuse to squeeze it into the budget.”

This was one of the benefits derived from the research institute.

“I will contact you once the Star Gate is completed. It won’t take that long.”

Ark quickly got up after clearing the situation.

“Then shall I take a look?”

“The talk has only just ended. Are you busy?”

“I’m always busy.”

“Yes, it is good for the young to be busy. When thinking about it, this is the age where you can’t relax if you want to live comfortably later on. A mountain of work can pile up after being gone for a few days. The Noblesse was destroyed so I need to submit a letter of apology.”

Even a noble was reprimanded when a cruiser was destroyed. Ark was now a noble. Despite that, he was the type to still pick up junk metal from a Nakuma.

“Anyway, I also can’t afford to be gone for a long time. But before you leave, please stop by the break room. Fay will be waiting.”

“Fay?”

Ark made an uncomfortable expression. Marquis Martin laughed and continued.

“Don’t look like that. He is waiting to give you something.”

“Give me something?”

“Ha, your eyes have become like bright lanterns. You are originally this type of person. Anyway, this is the result of your help. You won’t suffer a single loss. The compensation came from the military budget.”

The important thing was that it didn’t come from his pocket. Ark was OK with just receiving! He hadn’t realized there would be a reward so Ark’s eyes glittered.

“So don’t hate Fay too much.”

Marquis Martin said as he passed by.

Ark turned to face Marquis Martin who had a bittersweet expression on his face.

“Fay had a son. He was an outstanding warrior similar to Fay and perhaps he would’ve received the title of hero later. But he was too young. He died in a border chase with the Rama warriors. Perhaps Fay sees his son in you. His son who didn’t get a chance to receive the title of hero. His mind was probably anxious with worry. So I hope you say some warm words when meeting him.”

“Yes....”

“Or not.”

Marquis Martin laughed as he saw Ark’s hesitation.

“Anyway, it was intentional but....I enjoyed it quite a bit.”

“I wasn’t that bad.”

Ark replied with a grin. And he headed to the break room after leaving Marquis Martin’s office. A significant number of soldiers were gathered in the break room. Ark was looking for Fay when Hoksullo ran up to him.

“Hyung-nim!”

“Ah Hoksullo, have you seen Captain Fay?”

“Here I am.”

He heard an answer from behind him. And Fay approached him with a frown. He skimmed Ark with sour eyes and said.

“You are someone who really bothers Marquis-nim. In addition, there is also the supply staff. Why do I have to look at such an unpleasant person? Anyway, there is a bad smell. Well it can’t be helped. Hey, take it. I honestly don’t believe you are entitled to compensation but this incident needs to stay quiet.”

Fay threw a card at him.

-<Military Scrips: 4,000 has been received.

4,000 military scrips!

He had previously received 1,000 military tokens when rescuing Irina. At that time, Ark had rescued Irina alone.

On the other hand, this time there were dozens of people. Nevertheless, the reward was 4 times the previous compensation. It was obviously due to Marquis Martin’s position in the military. But personally, Irina was a million times more important than Marquis Martin!

However, this was not the only reward.

“These white ores appeared when the Eisyeon Nakuma disappeared. The rescue team found it in the underground space behind the slab. Some of them were sent to researchers as study materials but Marquis-nim also packed some shares. Resources obtained from space monsters belong to the person hunting. You fought in the battle so you are eligible for this much.”

The Soul Stone dropped from the Nakuma. But Ark had already obtained a Soul Stone. He had quickly packed 4 Soul Stones before the crew members could see! He also obtained a cloak that hadn't been identified yet. Now he felt slightly sorry for packing 5 more.

Yet Ark didn't refuse it. Ark quickly grabbed the Soul Stone contained in a stone box. Then Fay caught the back of the box and shook his head.

"Hey, don't you have something to say?"

"Huh? Something to say...."

It came out of nowhere. Then Marquis Martin's words suddenly flashed through his head. Fay had a son. Fay might've acted cold to Ark on Ikyullos but it was his way of expressing worry.

So he was asked to say some warm words. He should say something, even if it was small. However, he couldn't think of anything to say. Ark scratched his head and said.

".....Father?"

Fay flinched back. His reaction to Ark's answer....

"What is this brat talking about? Do you want to die? Huh? Be killed? No, I will kill you! Come out! I'll turn you into a beehive!"

"Wah! Captain Fay-nim, calm down!"

....Hoksullo and several nearby soldiers tried to calm him down.

Thanks to that, Ark pouted with an embarrassed expression. Fay threw the box at Ark with an annoyed look.

"That's it! Get lost!"

-<Soul Stone x5> has been received.

Still, he managed to receive the Soul Stones.

“Hyung-nim, please understand. Captain Fay-nim actually said before you came....”

Hoksullo came up to Ark and whispered. Then Fay burst out angrily.

“Master Sergeant Hoksullo!”

“Huh? Yes! Captain Fay-nim!”

“What is my rank?”

“R-rank? C-Captain-nim!”

“Didn’t you hear? Stand among the rest of the soldiers in rank!”

Fay shouted harshly. There was a ringing sound as 100 soldiers stood up. Fay walked forward and sneaked a glance at Ark.

“Take a look everyone! This man is Ark!”

The eyes of the soldiers were concentrated on Ark at the end of Fay’s words. There were some soldiers who didn’t know Ark. The soldiers started to murmur as they gazed at Ark. Then Fay’s voices rang out again.

“You might of heard about this! He is Beltana’s Hero! However, I did not admit it! And I won’t recognize it even in the future!”

‘This guy, does he really need to say those words?’

Ark scratched his head at Fay’s attitude. He didn’t have any attachment to fame but it didn’t feel good to be ignored like this. His face also became flushed as 100 eyes gazed at him.

However, he didn’t care about the issues regarding Fay. Just as Ark was about to step out of the room.

“It doesn’t matter what other people say! I know only one Ark! A comrade

who went through a battle of life and death with me! And a warrior I am willing to entrust my life to! Ark can be proud of the fact that he saved Marquis-nim! And I want you to pay homage to a fellow warrior of the Galactic Federation! Does anyone object?"

"No!"

"Good, everyone salute!"

Fay's voice resounded through the break room.

At the same time, the 100 soldiers organized themselves in rows of two. The heels of their military shoes made sharp contact with the ground and they saluted.

"Congratulations on your safe return! Sir Ark!"

-The <Unknown Planet> quest has been completed.

Quest reward: Experience + 50,000. Galactic Federation contribution + 5,000 Adventure +2,000

<Fame among the Galactic Federation soldiers has increased by 500>

-Your level has risen!

And the messages that rose.

He was reminded of something Fay had said something in the underground space. Certainly....Ark was unable to see some things in front of his eyes.

“Pant pant pant! Pant pant pant!”

A dense fog covered a jungle. A woman was gasping for breath.

Her name was Kaya. She hadn't said it but she was a user interested in Rapid. Don't ask her why. She just liked him since she first saw him.

It was the reason why she jumped to go to this place. Not long ago, she participated in a quest with Rapid at S-20. She thought it would narrow the distance between her and Rapid. However, Rapid misunderstood her interest as concern for Ark.

She regretted it a lot after that. But Rapid just acted like nothing had happened. In order to reconcile, even though Rapid seemed unaware, she overheard that Rapid was going to rescue the Silver Hand.

She followed secretly on an airship.

Situation 1: Rapid was in danger → Help → His appreciation would significantly rise!

Situation 2: There was no danger → A casual encounter → Think about a relationship → Appreciation would rise slightly!

She needed to create one of these situations! The key point of the operation was to increase appreciation! She thought it was a perfect plan.

Thus she tracked the Silver Star and entered Vesta's dungeon!

She thought that this opportunity to chase Rapid....everything became twisted. The world that Rapid headed towards was completely different from what he was imagining.

'It is strange! There is something odd!'

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

There was a deafening noise as the airship shook. Ark fixed his gaze to the dashboard. And he grabbed the stumbling Irina. It seemed like a scene with a nice atmosphere but unfortunately, the situation meant Ark and Irina couldn't produce such an atmosphere.

Irina turned her head and shouted.

“Sergeant Hajin, report!”

“I don't understand the situation! The windows and cameras have been covered by them! I can't control it! At this rate, there is a danger of crashing!”

“Dammit! This is....”

Ark bit his lips as he looked at the monitor. Just like Hajin said, the monitors only showed a black screen. They weren't broken. All of the external cameras weren't functioning due to the creatures blocking them.

It wasn't just the monitor functioning. They couldn't manoeuvre the ship so there was a risk of crashing into something.

Why was Ark and Irina suddenly in this situation?

“.....Damn!”

Some time ago, Ark had completed a great task. Ark had been annoyed. It took more time than he thought but he had resolved the problem on Ikyullos. And he left the headquarters after receiving Fay's warm (?) rewards.

There were no problems up to here. There was just one problem! Once again, Ark was a busy user.

He decided to check the situation at S-20 and the progress that Jay and Tori made on the blueprints. And he also needed to prepare to launch the

development of the investment fund. In addition, he had loot that required Item Analysis!

Just like Marquis Martin, Ark had a mountain of work. Therefore, Ark needed the Silver Star to return to S-20.

It was that part that irritated Ark. It was natural for Ark to contact Rapid so that they could return to S-20. It had been 4 days so it was natural for him to think it was over. Yet when he checked, they still hadn't returned to S-20.

So he tried to call Rapid.

-Ddoo....ddoo....ddoo....

The phone call didn't connect. It wasn't just Rapid. Ferguson, A, B and Kurakan. He couldn't contact them in the game.

'What? These bastards? Why can't I contact them? What is going on?'

They hadn't returned and contacting them didn't work. Ark wanted to track them down. The situation was frustrating but the Silver Star was the only spaceship Ark had.

'Fortunately, it seems like the Silver Star hasn't experienced a problem but....'

The Silver Star was Ark's ship. Even if other users sailed on it, the owner would receive a message if a serious problem occurred. He didn't receive any messages so it meant the Silver Star was safe.

'By the way, why can't I contact them? No matter what happens in the dungeon, shouldn't I be able to contact them even in reality? It is irritating that they're not picking up my telephone call. However, I can't just wait for them to contact me.'

Ark didn't have that type of personality. In the end, he decided to go there directly. But it wasn't an easy task.

Rapid had been heading towards the dungeon in the Outlands hundreds of kilometres away from Sidellin. He could there in a few hours riding the air board but Ark didn't know the exact location of the dungeon that the Silver Hand found.

He couldn't search the entire area with just his air board.

"Do you need a ride?"

Then Irina made a suggestion. In fact, the first thing Ark did after exiting the Tatuine headquarters was to meet Irina.

After conveying Ark's SOS message to Earl Weston's gleet, Irina returned to Tatuine with him and planned to leave him at S-20. However, Irina suggested accompanying him after hearing Ark's situation.

But Ark couldn't just accept it.

"Huh? But Irina-nim....."

"I have to face disciplinary action for leaving my station."

"So because of that...."

Irina burst out laughing at Ark's expression.

"Hohoho. Just kidding. It is true that I deviated from my station but the result ended up helping Marquis Martin. But I can't go back there after leaving my position so I was given a holiday as a type of reward. So I thought I would take this opportunity to see Ark-nim's S-20."

"I am grateful for your help but...."

"Then let's go. I've been a little bored since the magic circle investigation. In the meantime, there hasn't been a chance to play the game together. I will take this opportunity to adventure with Ark-nim."

“It might be dangerous.”

“I’m tough and also a hero of the Galactic Federation.”

Irina replied with a cute smile. His mood improved instantly! It made his day!

‘These bastards! If they’re making me worry about something small then they will be dead!’

Ark made a promise to punish them.

Anyway, Ark got on Irina’s ship and headed straight to Vesta. It wasn’t hard to find that dungeon that the Silver Hand disappeared into. Just like Rapid did, he used the optical scanners to find the container trucks and soon discovered a cave covered with vines.

“I don’t see the Silver Star. Did it enter?”

“It seems like it. The Silver Star is displayed on my Nymphe whenever it lands. Based on the message sent in the mail by the Silver Hand, communication doesn’t work well inside the dungeon. So we should look inside that dungeon.”

“Then we will enter.”

Irina’s ship entered the cave. And it vertically descended a huge hole for 100 metres until it angled like a cave. The incident took place when they were moving into the cave.

“Captain-nim, movement is detected!”

Hajin who was sitting in the cockpit reported with confusion. All of a sudden, the sound of wings was heard from every side as a huge number of black objects filled the cave.

The identity of the objects were bats! Bats 1 metre in size flew down from the ceiling and covered the spaceship. And....

“Captain-nim, at this rate....”

Hajin shouted while grabbed the joystick.

The cave was wide enough for the spaceship to enter. In addition, the bats covered the cameras and windows so there was zero visibility. The automatic control system malfunctioned and caused the spaceship to shake violently from side to side.

There was no guarantee that the spaceship wouldn't hit the wall!

‘In order to escape from this situation....’

“Turn off the automatic control system!”

Ark raised his head and exclaimed. Hajin flinched but Irina just nodded.

“Follow Ark-nim's instructions!”

“Increase the nozzle of the right wing to the maximum angle! Switch the nozzle of the left wing to the maximum downward angle! The angle of the right wing is 45 degrees! The angle of the left stern is 45 degrees! Report as soon as the adjustments are made!”

“Right 45 degrees....left 45 degrees....done!”

“Maximum output to the engine!”

“Jet!”

Hwaaaaack!

Flames emerged from both sides of the spaceship at the same time. The spaceship shook violently as the engines fired in different directions.

Marquis Martin had used this method when the tentacle had wound around the Noblesse. Marquis Martin used the fluctuations to loosen the tentacles.

He was able to confirm the effect immediately. Shortly after the spaceship

started shaking, the monitors started clearing up. In other words, the bats were falling off!

“Now! Aim at the with the automatic cannons and rush forward!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Irina’s spaceship, the Iron Lady shot ammunition everywhere as it rushed forward.

And after a fierce battle that was a one-sided massacre, the spent 10 minutes crossing the cave and arrived at a huge space.

Before they entered the cave, the landscape had been a lush jungle. This place didn’t seem like it was underground. But the rocks at the top made it clear that this was an underground world.

Now he could find out immediately. The Iron Lady shown a light in the underground space but it was difficult to see more than 50 metres of the terrain. And there was no reason to fly.

-Check the location of the Silver Star. The distance is 30 meters. Coordinates 128....

Ark switched the Nymphe to receive the signal of the Silver Star. Finding the Silver Star was his first purpose. Despite the fog covered the underground world, he soon caught the signal of the Silver Star. The distance was only 30 metres!

‘Rapid must’ve landed quickly because of the fog.’

“Ark-nim, we will land there.”

Syu syu syu syu syu!

Hajin landed the Iron Lady at the point where the signal was caught. And Hajin, Camel and Irina accompanied him once they landed. While the rest were

on vacation, Ark and Irina followed the signal of the Silver Star through the dense fog.

“Here.”

Ark stopped and manipulated his Nymph.

-The Silver Star is running in remote execution mode. Locked status... recognized the top level admin...okay. Unlock device with remote control mode, stealth mode off....

The subsequent messages flashed as the Silver Star emerged in the fog. Irina muttered as she checked the Silver Star.

“You’ve turned off stealth state.”

“Yes, it is strange.”

“Strange?”

“The crew arrived here with the Silver Star as their only means of transportation. The weapons should be activated to defend the base. I can’t understand why the Silver Star was only left in stealth mode without anyone defending it.”

At least one of them should be waiting nearby. Other people wouldn’t do this but Rapid is in charge. However, I can’t feel anyone around the Silver Star. I can’t think of a reason.

“What happened?”

“Let’s see.....”

Ark said as he looked around.

All of a sudden, there was the sound of trees parting from side to side. There were also continuous thumps in the fog.

Kung! Kung! Kung! Kung!

TO BE CONTINUED